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VOL 3 | AUGUST 1999

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gamers' Republic

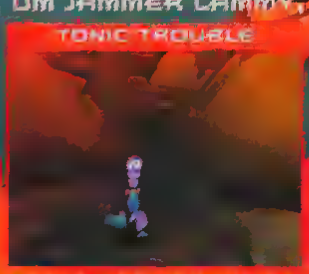
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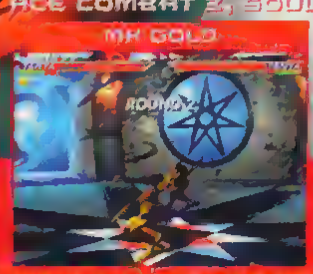


READY 2 RUMBLE BOXING

- **APE ESCAPE**
 ONE SMALL STEP FOR MONKEYS, ONE GIANT LEAP FOR GAME PLAY
- **TARZAN**
 SWING INTO ACTION WITH SONY'S BEST MOVIE-TO-GAME ADAPTION YET
- **RAYMAN 2**
 UBISOFT'S ENCHANTING SEQUEL IS ONE OF THE YEAR'S BEST

DEMOLITION RACER, MARIO GOLF, CROC 2, JADE COCOON, UM JAMMER LAMMY, ACE COMBAT 2, SOUL CALIBUR, MK GOLD







- AN INTERVIEW WITH TONY HAWK • NEO GEO POCKET FEVER • RETRO
- IMPORTS, ANIME, NEWS, MUSIC AND MOVIES!

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APE ESCAPE

You better get them before they get you.

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It's ape anarchy and it's up to you to stop their banana-fueled mayhem. You'll hunt down over 200 unruly apes, you'll drive a Tank, steer a Remote Control Car, you'll even launch an aerial attack in a propeller-powered Skyflyer. You'll use plenty of anti-ape devices, like a primate-pun-ishing Stun Club, a simian Slingshot and Monkey Radar. Plus, it's the first and only 3D game that fully utilizes the **Dual Shock™ analog controller**. Prepare yourself, things are about to get hairy.



Or other official PlayStation brand or licensed controllers featuring the "Analog Control" icon. Analog mode only. May not function or performance may

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gamers' Republic manifesto

For all the talk about violence in video games of late, we've sure had a run on funny critters and fantastical themes this month. Sure, you've got your semi-violent and outright barbarous games out there, but on the other end of the spectrum, games like Tonic Trouble, Ape Escape, Rayman 2, Tarzan, DK 64, and Jet Force Gemini beckon players to escape to worlds free from all the wholesale violence that ours is so plagued with. I hope that someday one of those bonehead politicians will be man (or woman) enough to point out how games can also enrich lives, rather than speak only of how they can turn the already twisted into raving loons. But, I suppose in order for anything to make sense in their dank arena it must be linked to negativity, since that is what the hangin'-jowl set feed off of.

Well, that was fun. Hey, the Dreamcast launch is just over a month away! Excited? I know we are. We're going to blow the roof off the launch in next month's issue. For now, though, you'll have to make due with the pages before you. Personally, August has been one of my favorite issues to work on. I hope you have as much fun perusing it.

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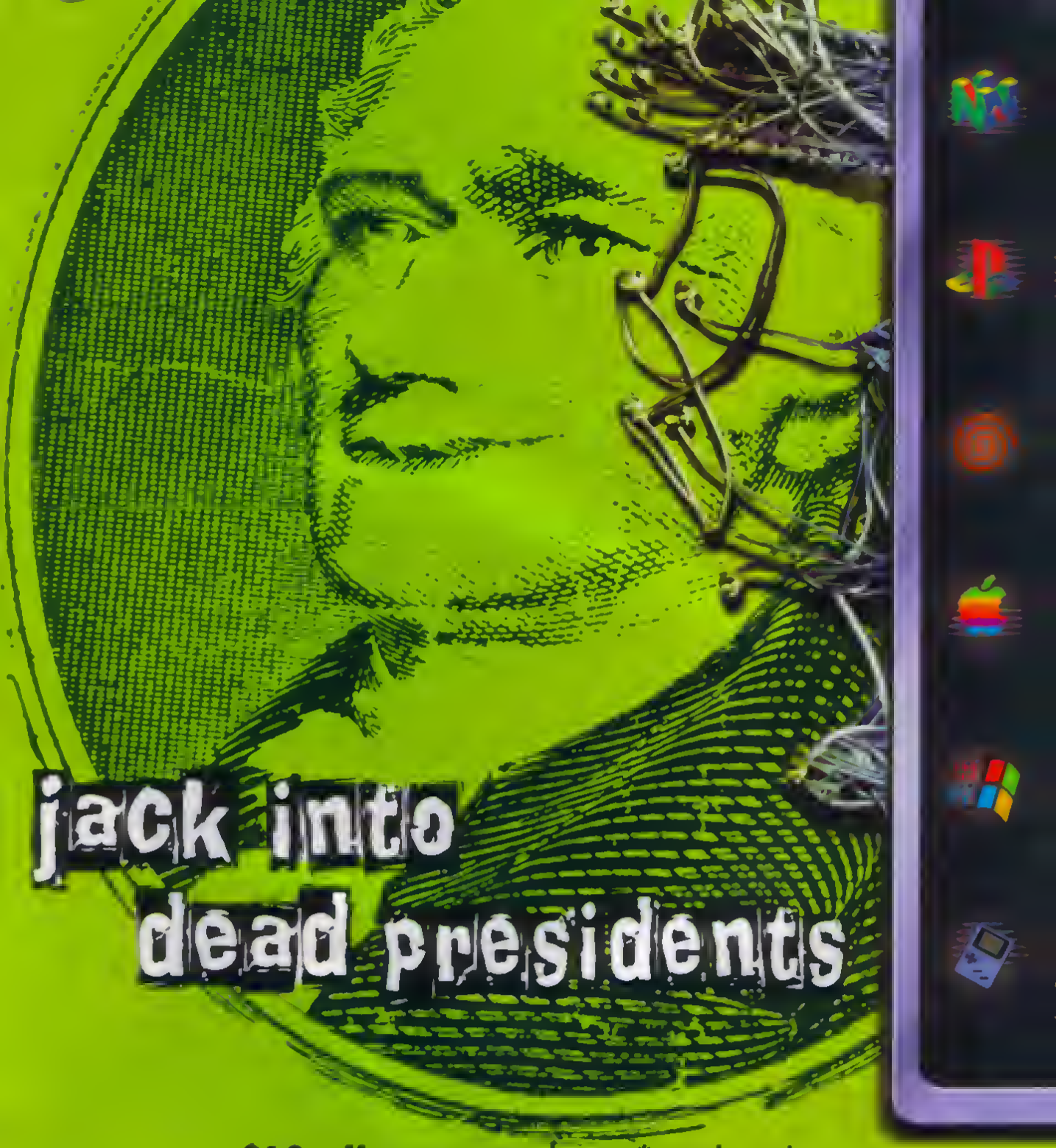
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SPECIAL THANKS: Andrew & everyone Mickey, Everyone at World Computer, Shelton at 911, Jennifer, Karen and Dave at Access PR, Sandra Yee, Wendy and Steven at EGM, Trish and the folks at Sunsoft, Scott & consoles.com, Central Park Media, Manhattan Pops, Good Loop, and You!

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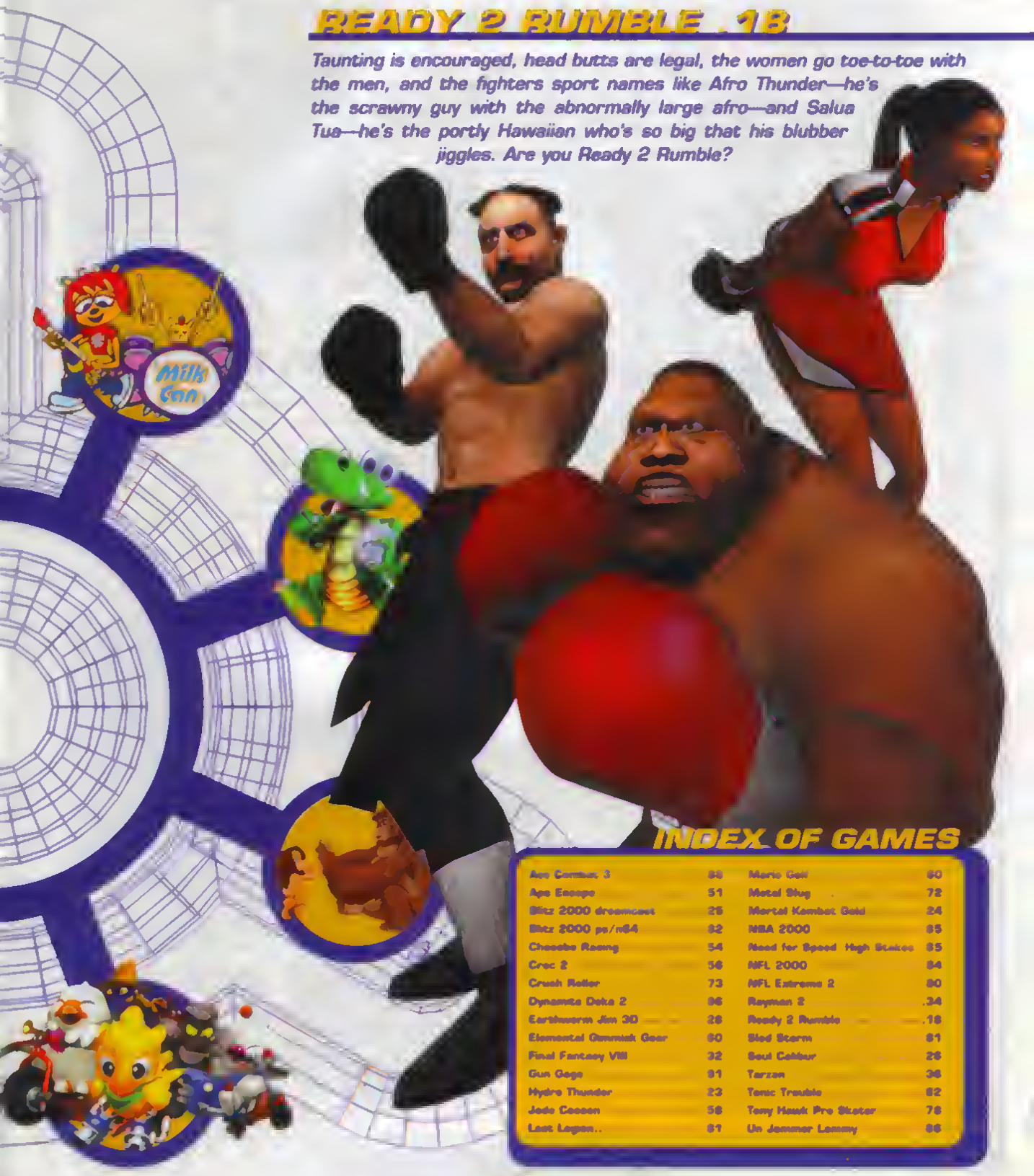
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READY 2 RUMBLE ..18

Taunting is encouraged, head butts are legal, the women go toe-to-toe with the men, and the fighters sport names like Afro Thunder—he's the scrawny guy with the abnormally large afro—and Salua Tua—he's the portly Hawaiian who's so big that his blubber jiggles. Are you Ready 2 Rumble?



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ISBN 4-89GR/12 1998
0 74820 08351 2 08
A MILLENNIUM PUBLICATION
GR
PRINTED IN JAPAN

GR VOL. 2, ISSUE# 3
GAMERS' REPUBLIC
TRANSCONTINENTAL GAMING GUIDE
A MILLENNIUM PROJECT



EARTHWORM JIM 3D .18

Jim's first foray into the third dimension, courtesy of VIS Interactive, is shaping up to be one of the year's best games for the N64. Coming soon from alternative developer Rockstar, Jim's found a comfy new home!

SOUL CALIBUR .18

Namco truly has the golden touch when it comes to system-defying arcade ports. Soul Calibur is so superior to its arcade counterpart that one can only drool at the prospect of future Namco endeavors on Dreamcast.

frontlines

SEGA NEW CHALLENGE CONFERENCE '99







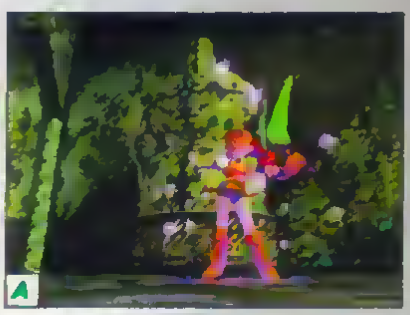






Sega of Japan unveiled its plan...

for increasing the market share of Dreamcast at the Sega New Challenge Conference '99, held in Tokyo. Sega made several aggressive announcements squarely aimed at picking up slacking sales of the Dreamcast in Japan.



The first announcement got the conference started in style. the Dreamcast's retail price will drop on June 24 to ¥19900 ($165) from ¥29800 ($240). The drop moves the Dreamcast's price that much closer to the PlayStation and N64, and into a range that's a lot more sensible than the original price. With Japan still in an economic recession, price differences between competing products mean that much more than usual.

The second announcement is also a concession to price as Sega rolled out a series of bargain priced Dreamcast games. Virtua Fighter 3, Sonic Adventure, Pen Pen Triathalon, Godzilla Generations, and July will all drop to 1990¥ ($16), to coincide with the new 19900¥ console price.

Sega also unveiled its complete Internet strategy, dubbed "Sega Heat." Over $89 million will be invested to complete the Sega Heat network, which will be made up of Sega's current 1-2 servers in Japan, 50 servers in Europe, and 200 servers in the U.S. The European effort will be headed up in conjunction with Telecommunications, the company that will offer free Internet access to Dreamcast owners in Europe. Sega runs its own servers in Japan (with help from its parent company, CSK), but requires outside help to complete the 200 U.S. servers (at deadline, rumors of a deal with AT&T go unconfirmed)

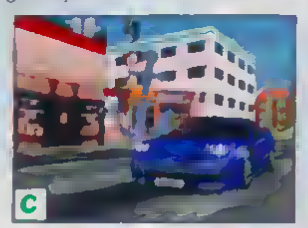
Sega confirmed various game titles, most of which were on hand at E3, for Japanese release. Japan is making a big deal out of Baldur's Gate *(B)*, the computer RPG that will come to Dreamcast with network gaming intact.

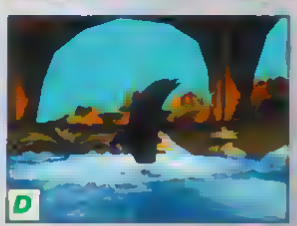
The Shenmue news from SNCC '99 is bad news—chapter one of Yu Suzuki's epic has been delayed to October 28 (from August 5). Sega followed up the announcement of the delay with details on the game's advertising campaign: pre-orders will be taken starting on September 9, with special products and goodies available to those who put money on Shenmue early

While we already knew of the Naomi version of Virtua Striker 2, Sega has now confirmed the Dreamcast game. Nothing more was said about the title and the only visuals available were from the arcade version.



The most exciting software-related announcement was of a new RPG from the Phantasy Star team called "Project Ares" *(A)*. Sega describes it as a large voyage that will cover the exploration of an unknown continent. According to Sega of Japan's press text, the adventure will have the theme of romance and courage. Project Ares is said to flow with new and imaginative ideas, but at the same time will allow casual game players to understand and enjoy the game.





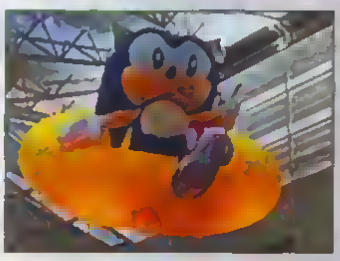
The other games announced have all been covered extensively as part of our E3 coverage: M-SR *(C)*, Ecco *(D)*, NFL 2000 *(E)*, NBA 2000 *(F)*, and Ready 2 Rumble (see the cover story this month for more information on this title, as well as Midway's other DC launch titles).





ALL WORK AND NO PLAY? NO WAY!





Tha tenth annual Japanesa hobby fair...

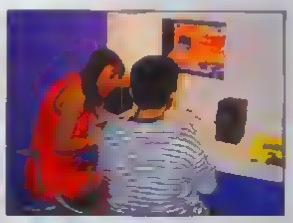
..was held at the Japanese convention center on June 12 13 The event focused on anime and large goofy stuffed characters. Of course, Sega was there to represent with a booth all of its own.

The relatively low key booth (in comparison to TGS) appealed to visitors of the hobby fair with VMU down load centers, Super Boy Kannipan playable kiosks, and Sonic characters As an added kicker, Mr. Dreamcast himself, Yukawa-san, was on hand to promote the newly announced Dreamcast price reduction to ¥19,900









HOLLYWOOD FIRST!

Dreamcast will hit the U.S. early...

...in the form of a special rental promotion to be kicked off by Sega and Hollywood Video on July 15. Hollywood Video is the second largest video rental chain in the nation; the promotion is a two-sided effort to get the buzz going about Dreamcast early, while at the same time building up Hollywood Video as the premiere place to rent gaming goods. The Dreamcast rental offer will serve up three choice titles for gamers to try out Ready 2 Rumble Boxing, Sonic Adventure, and Sega Rally 2.



...BUT LAUNCH TITLES LAG



Sega has pushed back...

..the release of two top-tier Dreamcast titles previously scheduled for the September 9th American launch: both NBA 2000 and Virtua Fighter 3tb are now set for October.

VF3tb has been delayed so that E3 recommendations, including a much-needed versus mode, can be implemented NBA 2000 has been pushed back for two reasons· to give Visual Concepts extra development time and to have the game's release coincide with the start of the new NBA season this fall.



A testament to the strength of the Dreamcast's launch lineup, the month-long delay of two relatively strong titles has done little to stop the positive atmosphere surrounding the console's 9/9/99 launch.

I DREAM OF WEENIES

On Saturday, June 19, Sega will publicly...



...show and allow people to play the Dreamcast. It is all going down at the 7th annual KROQ Weenie Roast and Luau. The southern California radio station will host the agog alternative rock concert of the year at the Irvine Meadows The 18 kiosks set to appear will showcase some of the 16 launch titles being prepped for this September These include Sega's self-published Sonic Adventure, NFL 2000, NBA 2000, Capcom's Power Stone, Midway's Ready 2 Rumble and Namco's Soul Caliber More than 18,000 people are predicted to be at the event, so you do the math A blistering 1,000 people per kiosk translates to better chances of getting back stage with Kid Rock and the groupies Sega is going to have all sorts of free stuff, none of which sound to be as valuable as being one of the first to experience playing any of the games—although an event pitting members from different rock bands to play against each other in Ready 2 Rumble and Soul Caliber should be interesting. Could you imagine the Lo-Fidelity Allstars beating up Metallica?

ZELDA: Ocarina of Sequels



Nintendo has announced that the much-talked-about Zelda sequel, the second chapter to last year's N64 release, would make an appearance at the Nintendo Space World August 27 in Japan. Not much has been said about the product besides the name that Nintendo is currently using— "Zelda: Gaiden." It is unknown if the game will be playable or not, but it is scheduled for release in Japan late this fall, so one would hope so. Zelda: OoT was originally developed for the never-released and presumably never-to-be released 64DD, and obviously some serious tailoring and editing needed to be made to fit the game into the cart; it looks as if the cut material will make it to the system after all. Expect to see new characters, items and expanded adventures, all using an improved engine. So far no word from the Nintendo camp in the U.S., though it is unlikely it will make an appearance until sometime in 2000.

LARA GOES SCI-FI

In an attempt to revitalize the network look and attitude, the Sci-Fi Channel has collected some provocative and outspoken people to host a series of channel identification spots, scheduled to start running on June 18. On board is rapper Busta Rhymes, actress and some would believe singer Traci Lords, and remarkably, Lara Croft. We aren't talking the model that was hired to act as Lara, but the CG beauty herself. This will only be the beginning for the extremely confident and capable tomb raider, as her film debut is still set for a Christmas release. You go girl!



SONY'S NEW HEADS SEE ALL, READ ALL

SCEI, together with Sony internal development (Core Technology and Network Company/ Semiconductors), has successfully developed an integrated chip for DVD/CD playback. Up until now, two separate laser devices were required to play back DVD (650nm) and CD (780nm).

However, by implementing this new technology, it will make it easier to reduce the size of DVD/ CD ROM devices and it will also help to reduce the production costs involved (since fewer parts will be needed compared to current technology). Previously it was thought to be impossible to have a single chip that reads both DVD and CD ROM formats.

According to Sony, "Since the two laser pick up locations will be decided during the production process, a precise and stable laser assembly can be made possible."



The size of the device is 7.5mm x 6.5mm x 2.0 mm, roughly the same size as the widely used (standard) CD playback integrated device. Sony announced that other than the PS2, the device would be used for various electronic appliances such as DVD-ROM and DVD Video. And moreover, depending upon future developments, they could confirm that the device would be employed in DVD/CD combination systems other than the PS2.

NO MORE AIR GUITAR

Whether or not we should be thankful for Konami's Beat Mania and Guitar Freaks, music games are becoming ever more popular in Japan. Attracted by the popularity of these music games, Namco have decided to enter this lucrative genre by releasing a new game called Guitar Jam. The game play is basically the same as Konami's Guitar Freaks in that players press buttons and use a pick to keep up with notes displayed onscreen during the game. But Guitar Jam is said to be more oriented toward those who are not satisfied with the simplicity of Guitar Freaks. The main difference is that the guitar itself is actual size and comes with 12 fret-sensitive buttons. In beginner and normal mode, the only thing you have to do is hit the string switch to the music in time. However, in expert mode, you have to do the same thing but press the fret button according to the instructions on the screen. It is much more difficult and very challenging, as you can imagine. A total of 17 different songs from several genres (J-Pop, Rock, Blues, etc) will be on hand. This arcade game will be available in Japan sometime in July.





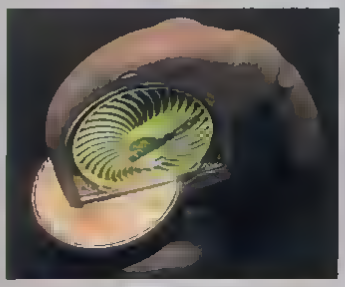
YES SINGS FOR HOME...WORLD!

Seminal progressive rock band Yes, whose new album "The Ladder" is due out in September, have jumped on the Sonia bandwagon. Inspired by Relic Entertainment's upcoming game Homeworld, they have written a song (called, appropriately enough, Homeworld) that will be included in the game and will be featured on their new album.

Perhaps this could prompt the Rolling Stones to contribute to Road Rash: Unchained... stay tuned!

YES

GAMEDOCTOR GIVES CDs A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH



Got a scratched CD? Does your game freeze on startup? Then the GameDoctor CD scratch repair device from Digital Innovations is in order!

From the acclaimed but yet to be officially endorsed GameDoctor series comes another useful product to add to your collection of gaming stuff. Looking more like a meat grinder, the GDCD is the world's first kit that successfully repairs CDs that have accrued a scratch or two during their lifetime. This ingenious device comes complete with a drying cloth, a buffing pad and even filtered (deionized) water, which are all used sequentially during the "recovery" process. Compliimented by a thorough instruction manual, the GDCD is quite a bargain. But does all this gimmickry really work?

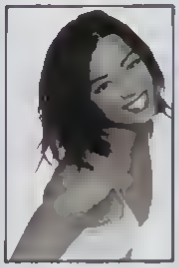
We gave this unit the test run on some of our most damaged cds lying about, and although it's quite a workout, we are happy to say the GDCD delivered pleasing results. By carefully shaving off a small portion of the CD's top layer, resurfacing is accomplished with about 2000 turns of the crank. Follow this by buffing out the marks left by the resurfacing wheel, and your CD should play as well as it did the day you bought it. Unfortunately, this device is only capable of restoring CDs that haven't been damaged on the label side. Nevertheless, GDCD is still a bastion of hope for those of who have lost a CD to the evils of sharp edges or younger siblings. Bravo.

MR. PINK IN FINAL FANTASY FLICK!

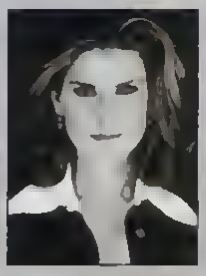


Square's Final Fantasy Production Committee have announced the voice actors and actresses for *Final Fantasy: The Movie*, currently scheduled to be released sometime in 2001. The collection of A-list stars is indeed impressive: Alec Baldwin, Donald Sutherland, Ving Rhames, Steve Buscemi, Ming-Na Wen, James Woods, and Peri Gilpin will lend their vocal talents to Square's CG opus. Square vice president and the film's executive producer Hironobu Sakaguchi stated that, "I feel grateful to work with such talented actors and actresses. I believe that they will bring life into the CG character and make them vividly expressive."







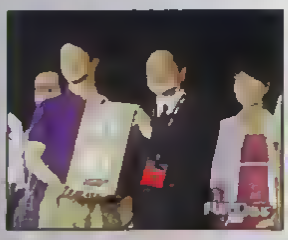


METROID 64?!

After months of denials from Nintendo's Kyoto headquarters, GR has received unconfirmed but fairly reliable reports that Shigeru Miyamoto himself has been overseeing the development of a 64-bit Metroid game. Rumored to use fairly substantial pieces of the Zelda engine, this new Metroid would stay true to the original's formula, mixing exploration and action in a sci-fi setting. Maybe if we all pray hard enough, chanting the name "Samus" 64 times every day, it will come true.



FFVIII WINS TRIPLE PLATINUM



SCEI held the annual PlayStation Awards in Tokyo June 8 to honor popular PS game titles that were released in 1998. The Triple Platinum Prize, which is given only to those titles that sell over three million copies, was given to the monstrous Final Fantasy VIII. Another 24 titles received categorical awards.

To commemorate 55 million worldwide shipments of the PS, all of the ceremony's visitors received wine bottles labeled "55 Million." It is amazing that more than 20 titles sold over 500,000 copies each, although the entire game industry itself is currently rather sluggish.

At the end of the ceremony, President Kutaragi said, "At the Tokyo Game Show Fall '99, we will announce further details on the next generation PlayStation."

Triple Platinum Prize
(3 million + sold)
Final Fantasy VIII *Square*

Platinum Prize
(1 million + sold)
XI (Devil Dice) *SCEI*
Densha de Go *Taito*
Crash Bandicoot 2*-SCEI*

Gold Prize
(500,000+ sold)
FIFA World Cup 98*-EA Square*
Final Fantasy VII International*-Square*
Densha de Go 2 *Taito*
Brave Fencer*-Square*
Powerful Pro Baseball *Konami*
Star Ocean Second Story *Enix*
Metal Gear Solid*-Konami*
Ridge Racer Type 4 *Namco*
Chocobo's Dungeon 2 *Square*
Simple 1500 Vol 1, The Mahjon*-Culture Publishers*
Genso Suikoden 2*-Konami*
SD Gundam G Generation *Bandai*
Monster Farm 2*-Tecmo*
Beat Mania *Konami*
Dance Dance Revolution*-Konami*
Street Fighter Zero 3 *Capcom*
Tales of Phantasia *Namco*
World Soccer World Cup '98*-Konami*
Saga Frontier 2*-Square*
Um Jammer Lammy*-SCEI*

GEEKEND '99: Veni. Veti. Geeki.

They came. They saw. They geeked.



"All hail, Topogigo! Long live the king!" From Friday, June 4, to Sunday, June 6, King Topogigo ruled over a kingdom of more than 60 gamers as they competed in a variety of board games, card games, and dice games. Geekend founders Golden Boat (Paul O'Connor) and Ulm (Chris Ulm), game designers for Oddworld Inhabitants (developers of Abe's Oddyssee and Abe's Exoddus), are both huge fans of board games and attribute many successful video game designs to strong foundations in these old-school games. Both had organized similar events on a smaller scale, but last year hit upon the idea of basing an entire weekend around playing as many games as possible, and engineered a points system using a currency called "geekers" to award those who won the various games. Those with enough geekers on the final day could enter the semifinals and compete for the title of "King of Games."











(A) Geekend founders Chris Ulm, left, and Paul O'Connor bask in the geeky glow. (B, C) Gamers from around the world enjoy Geekend's indoor and outdoor facilities in the clean central California air. (D) Roadkill, center, demonstrates his considerable leadership skills. He finds no golden geekers. (E) Juggernaut takes the crown...for now.

Geekend '99, held in Atascadero, California, officially began Friday at 6 p.m., although when GR's Edd Fear (a k a. Fear the Reaper) arrived, several games were already underway. Some geeks vowed to go the full weekend gaming without sleep, but most filled the tables between 8 a.m. and 3 a.m., selecting from the piles of games strewn about the game room, garage, deck, living room, and dining room. There were no set schedules or game times; when people finished one game, they'd often take a short break for food or drink (both of which were plentiful, thanks to the dedication of grillmaster Juggernaut and barmeister Fatpo), and then grab any other wandering geeks to start up a new game. Most had never played the games they joined into, but learned the rules as they played. This never seemed to be a problem, however; GR's geek of the weekend amassed piles of geekers playing games he'd never heard of.





(F) The only videogame played all weekend: Abe's Exoddus, naturally. (G) From left to right: Sparky, Ulm, and Fatpo prepare to feed the crowd.

While a majority of the attendees were employees of Oddworld Inhabitants (as Geekend has become almost an official holiday for them), there were gamers from Los Angeles and San Francisco, and some came from as far away as Texas, Georgia, and even East Germany. Upon arrival, all received nametags bearing their geek names: Twisted Santa, Choir Boy, Erk, Stazi, Fall Guy, Spud; it was said that the true geek name was given and not assumed. And most wore their names proudly.

While last year's king felt secure in his victory this year, other factions soon sprang up to challenge him, most notably the House of Po. Started by Oddworld Art Director Fatpo (the same guy mixing the awesome margaritas!), they vowed to dethrone the king, and Fear's strong showing Friday night prompted Fatpo to extend an invitation into their camp. Other groups like Roadkill's House of Freaks rose up during the weekend, but lacked the organizational skills and stamina to pose any real threat to the crown.

By Sunday at noon, the geekers were tabulated to determine who was eligible to enter the semifinals. Fear the Reaper had earned just short of 100 geekers on his own, but as the House of Po sought power in numbers, the members pooled their winnings and distributed them amongst three members: Fear, Fatpo, and Juggernaut, all of whom entered the semifinals.

When the dust cleared, these three geeks were still in the running, along with Lumberjack, Roach, and King Topogigo. The final game was Lifeboats, a turn-based deal-making game in which the ultimate goal is to get as many of your shipwrecked sailors as you can safely to the island, often at the expense of the others. In secret House of Po meetings, it had been agreed that Fear was the man to push for the crown, but in the final few moves, Juggernaut, the Royal Pretender from last year's game, showed his true colors, and in a brilliant flurry of underhanded moves and deals (the true skills of the game), snatched the crown and ascended the throne.

At the closing ceremonies, Juggernaut was declared the King of Games and Fatpo received Most Valuable Drunk (for his own state and the state he put many other people in). The Royal Pretender trophy should have gone to House of Freaks leader Roadkill, but since he left the event early, the honor went to the next in line, GR's own Fear the Reaper. Other awards included the Spamley Cup, given to the person who participated in the most games throughout the weekend, and the Rules Lawyer trophy.

Geekend '99 goes down in history, but plans for Geekend '00 are already well underway.

All hail Juggernaut! Long live the King!



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top ten selling playstation titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MAY 1999



1 SYPHON FILTER 989
2 TRIPLE PLAY 2000 EA
3 NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES EA
4 MLB 2000 989
5 3XTREME 989
6 ARMY MEN 3D 3DO
7 NAMCO MUSEUM VOL 1 NAMCO
8 FROGGER HASBRO
9 NAMCO MUSEUM VOL 3 NAMCO
10 GRAN TURISMO RACING SONY

top ten selling nintendo64 titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MAY 1999

1 SUPER SMASH BROTHERS NINTENDO
2 MARIO PARTY NINTENDO
3 ALL STAR BASEBALL 2000 ACCLAIM
4 GOLDENEYE 007 NINTENDO
5 ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME NINTENDO
6 SW ROGUE SQUADRON LUCASARTS
7 MARIO KART 64 NINTENDO
8 SUPER MARIO 64 NINTENDO
9 BEETLE ADVENTURE EA
10 TRIPLE PLAY 2000 EA



top ten selling saturn titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MAY 1999



1 NHL '97 EA
2 CROC: LEGEND OF GOBBOS FOX
3 MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH WD
4 HEIR OF ZENDOR KOEI
5 NBA LIVE '98 EA
6 SONIC R SEGA
7 FIGHTING VIPERS SEGA
8 NBA ACTION '98 SEGA
9 NHL ALL-STAR HOCKEY '98 SEGA
10 SONIC 3D BLAST SEGA

top ten selling pc titles

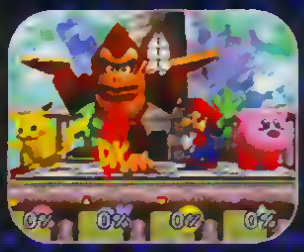
*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MAY 1999

1 CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER ACTIVISION
2 CABELA'S B.G.N. 2 HEADGAMES
3 SIMCITY 3000 MAXIS
4 FROGGER HASBRO
5 ROLLER COASTER TYCOON MICROPROSE
6 FALCON 4.0 HASBRO
7 AGE OF EMPIRES MICROSOFT
8 EVERQUEST 989
9 HALF LIFE SIERRA
10 LEGO ISLAND MINDSCAPE



top ten overall console

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD MAY 1999



1 SMASH BROTHERS-N64 NINTENDO
2 POKEMON BLUE-GB NINTENDO
3 POKEMON RED-GB NINTENDO
4 STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3-PS CAPCOM
5 MARIO PARTY-N64 NINTENDO
6 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4-PS NAMCO
7 SYPHON FILTER-PS 989
8 TRIPLE PLAY 2000-PS EA
8 NEED FOR SPEED:STAKES-PS EA
10 MLB 2000-PS 989

world republic top ten games

japan

1	POKEMON STADIUM 2 N64	6	POKEMON SNAP N64
2	DANCE DANCE REV. PS	7	WORLD STADIUM 3 PS
3	POKEMON PINBALL GB	8	OMEGA BOOST PS
4	CULDCEPT~expansion PS	9	DIMPLE SERIES 1500 Vol. 10 PS
5	SMASH BROTHERS N64	10	BUST A MOVE 2~D.T.Mix PS

*FROM APRIL 26 ~ MAY 9 1999

united kingdom

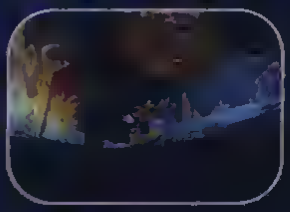
1	GTA LONDON PS/PC	6	TOMB RAIDER 2 PS/PC
2	GRAN TURISMO PS	7	METAL GEAR SOLID PS
3	GRAND THEFT AUTO PS/PC	8	CRASH BANDICOOT 2 PS
4	FIFA '99 PS/N64	9	R.R.T. 4 PS
5	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER S PC	10	CASTLEVANIA N64

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD THE MONTH OF MAY 1999

gamers' republic top ten games

*BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH JUNE 18, 1999

d. halverson



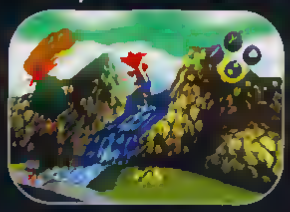
1	RAYMAN 2	N64
2	TONIC TROUBLE	N64
3	APE ESCAPE	PS
4	EARTHWORM JIM 3D	N64
5	METAL SLUG 1st Mission	NGP
6	READY 2 RUMBLE	DC
7	TARZAN	PS
8	MARIO GOLF	N64
9	HYDRO THUNDER	DC
10	BLUE STINGER	DC

t. stratton



1	SUPER SPRINT	ARCADE
2	GRAN TURISMO	PS
3	BUST A MOVE 2	PS
4	ISS SOCCER	N64
5	WORLD SERIES BASEBALL	SS
6	CYBERBALL	ARCADE
7	SILENT HILL	PS
8	GOLF	NES
9	KARNOV	ARCADE
10	TECMO BOWL	NES

b. siechter



1	APE ESCAPE	PS
2	SOUL CALIBUR	DC
3	READY 2 RUMBLE	DC
4	DF ZERO 3	PS
5	MARIO GOLF 64	N64
6	DYNAMITE DEKA 2	DC
7	BLITZ 2000	DC
8	RAYMAN 2	N64
9	UM JAMMER LAMMY	PS
10	ECHO NIGHT	PS

e. spear



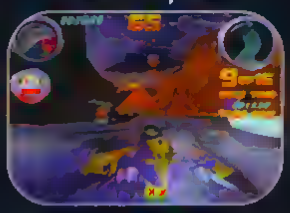
1	TARZAN	GBC
2	CRUSH ROLLER	NGC
3	MEDIEVIL	PS
4	SURVIVAL KIDS	GBC
5	READY 2 RUMBLE	DC
6	V RALLY	GBC
7	SYPHON FILTER	PS
8	SPY VS. SPY	GBC
9	KING OF FIGHTERS R2	NGC
10	GRAN TURISMO	PS

m. hobbs



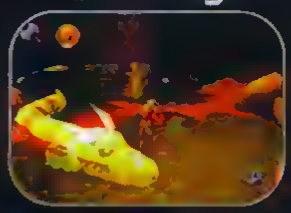
1	MARIO GOLF 64	N64
2	ACE COMBAT 3	PS
3	SOUL CALIBUR	DC
4	APE ESCAPE	PS
5	METAL SLUG 1st Mission	NGP
6	JADE COCOON	PS
7	DYNAMITE DEKA 2	DC
8	SILENT BOMBER	PS
9	CHOCOBO RACING	PS
10	SHUTOKOU BATTLE	DC

b. elmquist



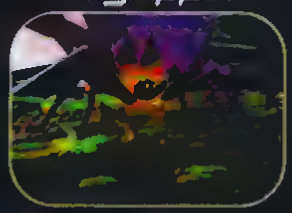
1	HYDRO THUNDER	ARCADE
2	READY 2 RUMBLE	DC
3	SOUL CALIBUR	DC
4	GOLDENEYE 007	N64
5	METAL GEAR SOLID	PS
6	TUROK 2	N64
7	PANZER SAGA	SS
8	FINAL FANTASY VII	PS
9	S.F. ZERO 3	PS
10	S.F. ZERO 2	ARCADE

j. corby



1	MEDIEVIL	PS
2	WIPEOUT	PS
3	QUAKE II	PC
4	QUAKE III TEST	PC
5	FF TACTICS	PS
6	PARASITE EVE	PS
7	BLOODY ROAR 2	PS
8	READY 2 RUMBLE	DC
9	CASTLEVANIA:SOTN	PS
10	SILENT HILL	PS

m. griffin



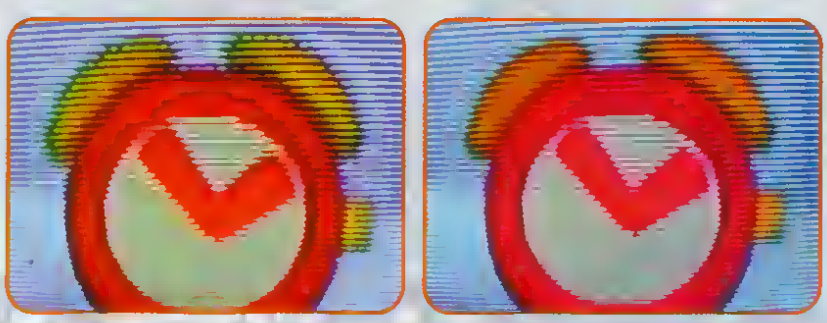
1	EVERQUEST	PC
2	DYNAMITE DEKA 2	DC
3	METAL SLUG 1st Mission	RGP
4	SOUL CALIBUR	DC
5	MESSIAH	PC
6	SAMURAI SHOWDOWN 2	NGP
7	CONTRA HARD CORPS	GEN
8	DRAKAN	PC
9	SF ZERO 3	PS
10	GAUNLET LEGENDS	N64

With all the talk about graphics accelerators, polygons per second, and resolution, it's easy to lose sight of a much simpler factor that can have a big impact on how your games look: what you're seeing them on, and how your system is hooked up. While receiving almost no press, this single factor can make the difference between a blurry, jittery picture, and true arcade quality at home. To some extent, the picture quality will depend on what television or monitor you have to play on, and although this should perhaps be a factor in guiding your next purchase, there's not a whole lot you can do about it right now. On the other hand, people often have the hardware to get a better picture, and simply don't realize that they're not getting the best out of their system. This month, we'll examine three different ways of hooking your console up, and what the advantages and disadvantages are for each.

The first option is what has become the default option for consoles: composite video cables. These have three connectors that look the same, generally color-coded yellow, white, and red. The white and red connectors carry the left and right speaker information, while the yellow has to carry the picture information. This may sound perfectly reasonable, and in fact it would be-if the picture were black and white. But a color picture really has three fundamental information streams, which can be described as the amounts of red, green, and blue in the picture. All of this is getting combined into one signal, and then has to be separated by the television, and that is what causes problems. In particular, problems arise because the signals are combined in such a way that brightness information (i.e., what is needed for a black and white picture) overlaps with color information, which can either create false color in very detailed images, or wreak havoc at the boundaries of brightly colored areas. The extent of these problems depends a lot on whether or not your TV makes use of the most recent (and most expensive) filters to separate out the brightness and color information, but even the best filters will still show some problems. The most common and visible of these is called "dot crawl," and occurs whenever there's a horizontal or vertical color boundary, like at the edge of a brightly colored logo. What you will see is that the boundary, which should be perfectly straight and stable, instead has a bunch of dots along it, often moving rapidly. Even aside from how unappealing the dots themselves are, they can also be very distracting; the first time you see something without dot crawl, you may well notice many details you never picked up before, even with something as simple as a title screen. Finally, you'll likely notice that the composite video results is substantially blurrier pictures than the better methods, so you may even be missing some details because you simply can't see them with composite video. So what are the advantages of composite video? The main one is price: since it's basically the default now, you shouldn't have to buy a single cable to use it, and most televisions sold these days, even down to the smallest sizes, support it. That said, not all of them do; without composite video, you're stuck with RF, which these days means dealing with lower picture quality and having to buy a separate cable. Whatever you do, don't buy a television that doesn't have at least composite video (also called A/V) inputs.

The next option, probably the most underrated of the three, is S-Video. It separates the video signal into a brightness component and a color component, thereby avoiding the problems that composite video runs into. The picture is sharper, and more stable, with no distracting dot crawl. However, not all TVs have it; those that do tend to be larger (25" is a bare minimum) and more expensive, and if you bought the cheapest TV in a given size range, there's a good chance yours doesn't support it. It's easy to check for: just look at the composite video inputs, and see if any of them have an additional input that's round with a few holes, looking more like a mouse or keyboard connector than anything else. If so, your TV has S-Video, and you may well want to look into getting S-Video cables for your consoles. However, while S-Video produces a much better picture than composite video on most TVs, it is still far from perfect. Aside from the price, it faces a more fundamental limitation: televisions aren't built to produce high quality, high resolution, 60 frames per second video. Rather, they draw a full high resolution frame 30 times per second, in two passes per frame, with the second pass filling in lines between the lines of the first pass. This method is called interlacing, and makes the picture flicker, most noticeably when looking at thin horizontal lines. It also means that when displaying video at 60 frames per second, it can only draw half of each frame, which can lead to an annoying comb-like effect at the edges of objects moving horizontally. So what else is there besides composite and S-Video? On the Dreamcast and other upcoming consoles, it's actually possible to output the picture right to a VGA monitor.

True VGA output (not to be confused with "upscan converters", which take a regular television signal and spit out a monitor signal, but not at the same quality) has none of the previously mentioned problems; the picture is crystal clear, and thanks to lack of interlacing, completely stable, and at a smooth, high resolution, 60 frames per second. The one visual disadvantage it can have is that seeing the picture so clearly will bring out its flaws: on a monitor (and to some extent, with S-Video also), you'll see how jagged diagonal lines look, and even occasionally notice a texture looking pixelated which was fine on the blurrier composite video. Beyond this, most monitors are a lot smaller than televisions, and are typically built to display resolutions much higher than a console; it's unlikely you'll be able to build a home theater around a monitor. There are some industrial monitor receivers which have larger screens, the right resolution, and can serve



Check out the dot-crawl in full effect here, using the DC's front end menu clock as a example. As you can see on the right, S-Video provides a much clearer image with better color rendition than composite, a benefit of keeping the luminance (brightness) and chrominance (color) information separate.

TECHFRONT

TVS, CABLES, AND CONSOLES

ARE YOU GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR GAMES?

BY BRIAN OSBERMAN



both as a TV and for VGA game playing, but these are still very pricey; since they are not considered a consumer item, they typically start around 30" and $2000.

As it stands now, I actually use S-Video over VGA output on my Dreamcast so that I can play on my nice large TV, sitting on a couch, without having to either bring the Dreamcast over to my computer, or haul the monitor over to somewhere more comfortable. I do find the interlacing annoying, but the S-Video's picture is so sharp otherwise that it doesn't bother me nearly as much as settling for composite video would. Of course, a monitor receiver with VGA inputs would be ideal, but those are still way outside a reasonable price range. So what's the takehome lesson? First off, check your options. See whether your TV has S-Video, and if it does, don't hesitate in going out and getting the cables to use them. The picture clarity will improve dramatically. Second, once you have a Dreamcast or any other upcoming system, you may want to look into VGA support as well. Tastes here vary dramatically as to whether using the smaller monitor is a fair tradeoff for the sharper, smoother picture, so if you can, try before you buy. Here I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the Dreamcast VGA Box comes with S-Video outputs as well, so if you're thinking of getting it, you won't need to purchase the proprietary S-Video cable separately (you'll still need a standard S-Video cable, but these are typically cheaper, and you'll be able to use them with other things like camcorders). Lastly, if you're looking to buy a new TV, you may want to seriously consider purchasing one with S-Video inputs. It may be a little pricier, but the difference is substantial.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for topics you'd like to see covered, please email techfront@gamersrepublic.com.

Thanks to Jason Bleers for suggesting this topic.

Taunting is encouraged, head butts are legal, the women go toe-to-toe with the men, and the fighters sport names like Afro Thunder—he's the scrawny guy with the abnormally large afro—and Sumo Tuo—he's the portly Hawaiian who's so big that his blubber jiggles. This is Ready 2 Rumble, the Midway boxing game of an outrageous order.

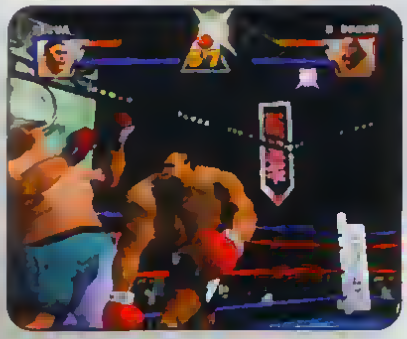
They may be reticent to flat out admit it, but the Ready 2 Rumble development team know, deep down inside, they have a possibly meteoric hit on their hands. As a prominent launch title for Sega—the heavy placement of the game in various key marketing schemes shows just how much value the company places on it—Ready 2 Rumble carries significant weight, a prize-fighter in the biggest bout Sega has perhaps ever faced—a no-holds-barred rumble with daunting giants Sony and Nintendo, both entering the next-generation ring with their respective powerhouses, PlayStation 2 and Project Dolphin. Michael Buffer, who lends his likeness and immortal voice to the game as a ring announcer, says it best: let's get ready to rumble.

READY 2 RUMBLE



Midway comes out of the corner swinging...

you've never seen boxing like this before





So how does a boxing game—a take on a genre that has been essentially dormant since 16-bit days—manage to generate extremely positive industry buzz, catch the eye of a company that is in the most important transitional period of its life, and promote comments that Ready 2 Rumble is the best boxing game to come along in years?

"It's just an incredibly fun game," says Terry Bertram, Ready 2 Rumble's senior programmer. "When we first made a prototype to pitch this idea to management, our idea was to make something that was pure entertainment—fun was the first factor."

An obvious answer. But with a game like Ready 2 Rumble, the broad label of "fun" carries wide meaning—personality, character, style, magnetic winsome. When you first see this bright, colorful game, an immediate description is Punch Out in 3D. One of its strongest asset is an instantly likeable look, a charismatic, lighthearted energy with that special universal appeal.

"We came up with a certain look to the game—something that would accomplish a fun feeling," explains Emmanuel Valdez, the game's lead artist and designer. "It's almost like what Nintendo set out to do with Punch Out. We wanted to come up with cartoony characters, and really concentrate on coming up with an appealing, unique look to the game. We went around and took pictures of the company, someone on the team or someone we know—a girlfriend or a wife, a family member. Then we digitized them and actually textured them onto models and changed proportions to give them that cartoony feeling."

The result is a colorful collection of fighters, each exuding immensely unique personalities. With around 8-10 boxers initially selectable, players can unlock as many as 10 more, ranging from a scrappy praying-mantis-style 1920s fighter with a thick, curled mustache to a towering brute of a fighter with a face as dense as an engine block.

As technically impressive as they are deftly stylized, the boxers, belting it out at 60 frames per second, boast great animations, a thick polygonal girth and remarkable facial detail, and the motion-captured movements—a stunt man was brought in for the extreme stuff—fuse every knock down, taunt and wild punch with delightful realism. For all the atten-



Blubber rolls, faces swell, sweat flies and teeth shatter...

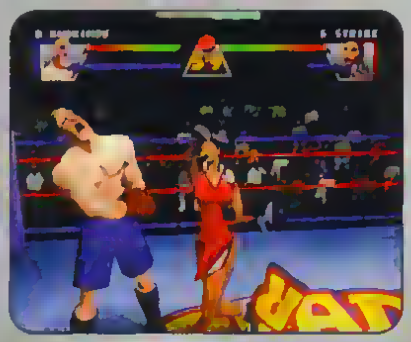
Boxing realism only the Dreamcast can deliver

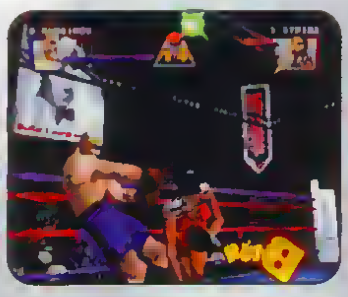
tion to details, the most meticulous accomplishments reside in the ambitious use of 115 individual facial expressions—eyes blink, brows move, lips quiver. "In the future, we're going to see many more games with facial expressions," declares Valdez. "The reaction has been enormous to what we are doing, and we're really happy to see that. It's something that will really be a part of the next generation of games. Things have been kind of stale lately, but games will be going to the next level."

In order to facilitate the unprecedented realism in the facial movements, the character's jaws have actually been built separately from the head, and when a brutal punch is landed, facial contusions form, bruises swell up, and sweat spatter begins to turn red with blood. "That is actually done geometrically, not just with textures," explains Bertram. "There are geometrical facial expressions where there are vertices on the face; they have teeth behind the lips, separate eyes that track the players. The bruising that happens is actually from swell points located inside the head, so if you get hit on the right side, it will swell up with color. We're also going to be adding jiggle points to the bodies, so the fat guy, when he jumps up and down, you'll see his skin bounce; the women's breasts do the same. We're even adding things like teeth falling out."

To ensure that sensational strings of damage are delivered with the greatest of ease, the Ready 2 Rumble gameplay gravitates towards an intuitive, exaggerated approach to boxing. "We really set out to make the game simplistic and easy to get into," says Dave Wagner, Ready 2 Rumble's lead programmer and designer. "We want an ease of play that even children can get into, but we also added layers of complexity and appeal for the more hard-core gamer: there are combos and special moves for added depth. We're just trying to keep it quick and simple: no pushing ten different buttons to pull off a move and watch it go. A lot of moves are based on the direction of the joystick."

Indeed, the combo system in the game is kept basic, rhythmic and quick-









ly flowing, but for added depth and flair, a system called Rumble Power has been implemented. The Ready 2 Rumble team likes to refer to it as the super power, which builds after a certain number of stronger punches have been landed. When the meter reads "Rumble," a quick tap of both trigger buttons unleashes a brief burst of energy, imbuing the fighter with the ability to wail on an opponent with a number of enhanced moves —hidden, manic combos are made available, damage and speed are increased, the power meter stays fully charged.

With its emphasis on the extreme side of boxing, Ready 2 Rumble still maintains a calculated balance between the sensational and the real. "You have your basic set of punches, and you combo off them just as you would in actual boxing," begins Wagner. "There are actually combos specific to each fighter, which we created so it seems logical for their type of character and personality. "We wanted to make sure it was still boxing—there's a set of rules, no fireballs. But we wanted things you wouldn't normally see in boxing: ultra fast flurries, jumping punches, head butting, hitting below the belt, stuff like that. It's definitely extreme boxing, but we still try and keep within the rules as much as possible."

Because of the spirited look and feel of the game, the speed and agility of the boxers, it's tempting to play Ready 2 Rumble as a wanton slug fest: move in, pound buttons, disregard blocking and any sensible strategy. But to dispel such tendencies, a power meter works as sort of a strategy check, forcing the player to move in and out, carefully selecting what punches to throw, and at what intensity. "If you watch boxing, they don't just sit there and wail forever," observes Wagner. "And that's where the power bar comes in: the bigger the punch, the more power it takes. You can do quite a few jabs in a row before you get tired and have to



back off, but a really powerful punch will take a lot more off. It slows you down, forces you to back off."

Among such additions as rope interaction, boss characters and round girls, the inclusion of a Championship mode shows Midway's sense to dig deeper than simply offering a straightforward, two-player arcade-style experience. "The championship mode will give the game much longer legs," says Wagner. "Granted, we want this to be like a party game—you can't beat challenging a friend. But you'll do a lot of single playing in the Championship mode. People are spending their [hard-earned] money on this, so they deserve extra layers of game play—at least 30 good hours of play. So that's why we've added the Championship mode."

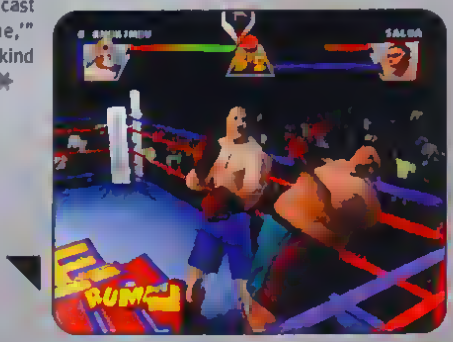
In a sense, the Championship mode places you directly in the role of manager: allocate winnings, sign boxers, train them on multiple sets of equipment. And once a boxer has climbed the ranks, vying for three championship belts, there are certain decisions that must be made. "Boxers fight for so many fights, and then you have to resign them or start training a new boxer," explains programmer Ian McLean. "All the training games are little mini-games, different from the main arena, where you can train them for more strength, speed, power. The boxers continues to develop attributes as you have them sign longer and develop experience."

Beginning the climb to the top is not meant to be easy: the first fights take place in a grungy gym, where crowds are small and the conditions unfavorable. As the fighter grows, so does his status—the crowds increase, small arenas eventually become outdoor stadiums, the competition more extreme. After a belt is won, challengers will vie for the title, and once you've achieved peak status, your ultimate fighter can be saved on a VMU for trading or the ultimate competition with a friend.

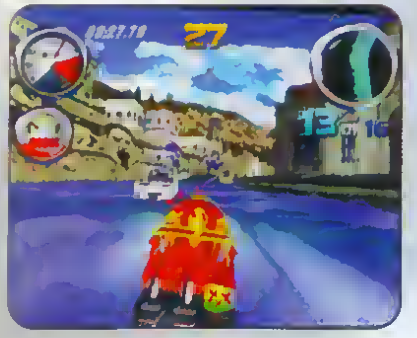
The gameplay is ostensibly getting the proper treatment, but as Ready 2 Rumble's sound engineer, Orpheus Hanley, is more than happy to point out, sound effects will certainly not be taking a back seat. "In a lot of games, you have really heavy music that gets in the way of the sound. In this game, we're trying to make it feel like you are actually watching a fight. We're concentrating on sound—the crowd, the punches, the things the fighters themselves are saying, the ref, the corner man. There's actually like 700 sounds per corner man." Adds McLean: "We'll actually be using the whole capacity of the GD, just because we have thousands of corner men sounds. This stuff will really give you the feel of watching a real boxing match."

So now the proverbial question remains: is the team satisfied with what they've accomplished? In less than three months, the Dreamcast will finally launch in America, and Ready 2 Rumble, ready or not, will be part of the remarkable 15-title lineup. Will gamers look to a colorful, free-spirited boxing game for their source of ... well, fun?

"We're certainly anxious to find out. But we heard a few comments from people walking away from our booth at E3, and testers hearing people say 'I'm buying a Dreamcast just for this game,'" recalls Bertram. "It kind of blew me away."







Midway's wet-and-wild arcade superboat racer makes a splash on the Dreamcast

How long must we wait till another great water-based racing game comes along with the same engaging intensity as Wave Race 64? Perhaps no longer than September 9, the day the high-speed boat racing of Hydro Thunder is transplanted from the arcade and into the homes of DC owners.

In the arcade, Hydro Thunder's watercraft are greatly affected by the force of active wave physics, which, if preserved by the capable Dreamcast, will rival the same realism and intensity of the masterwork Wave Race. But here is where comparisons to Miyamoto's classic end.

As a pure-bred arcade racer, Hydro Thunder is about speed and ease of play, radical style and sparkling graphics. With extreme powerboats forming the field of competition, the key to winning a race comes down to the strategic capturing of power boosts that fuel your craft's jet boosters. A craft that is fully up to speed and adequately powered-up can reverse thrust and utilize a quick jet boost to rocket into the air, enabling a racer to reach hidden stretches of track and normally unreachable booster charges. Constantly keeping the booster gauge filled is paramount to a strong finish, because not only is speed enhanced, but the craft becomes invincible, able to charge through course hazards and any hapless racer caught in the racing line.

Midway

Midway

In what has become practically expected in a Dreamcast game, Hydro Thunder is an ample feast for the eyes, the finely detailed courses stretching remarkably far and wide, filled with huge objects like flowing water falls, sunken ships under the transparent water, towering bridges and crumbling skyscrapers.

Midway

With the look of the game already a formidable match to the arcade Hydro Thunder, and two Dreamcast-exclusive tracks in the works, Midway's assurance of the gameplay receiving proper attention can only mean this highly charged game will be added horsepower to the Dreamcast launch machine.

Midway









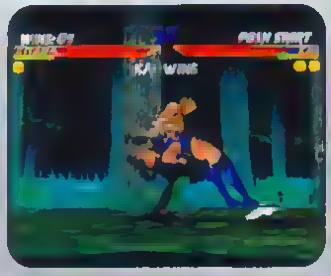




Millena, Baraka, Cyrax and Kitana make their polygonal debut.

Midway's Mortal Kombat is golden on Dreamcast

The definitive Mortal Kombat game is on the way, exclusively for the Dreamcast with the apt name of Mortal Kombat Gold. The team found that porting the MK4 game to the Dreamcast left them room to improve the existing game, so they started adding characters from previous MK titles. Now the game amalgamates characters from MK2, 3 and 4. Using the exact 3D models as the arcade, MK Gold's characters are comprised of more than 3,000 polys, and the game runs at 60 frames. Looks like glorious days of 60 fps are ahead.





Since some of the characters like Baraka, Cyrax and Kitana have yet to make the transition from digitized characters to 3D models, the MK team worked with Eurocom Software to make the shift. You can expect the signature moves of old-school characters to look better than ever as well. Even with all of the extra characters—there are now 20 total—Midway sought for more. An easy and respectable move was to remove the real-time endings and create all-new full motion endings, and that's what they have done.



There are impressive new backgrounds to be seen, but the real issue is, how does the game play? Well, extremely fast and without a stutter. The Dreamcast controller takes some time to adjust to, but once you do, it feels great. The game is still in development, but it is obvious that the completed version will be the truest conversion of the MK series yet.





NFL Blitz 2000. Fast. Furious. And arcade perfect.

Alternative sports for the extreme gamer





This September is going to mark the sovereignty of both the Dreamcast and Midway. With multiple versions of this title being prepped for a blanketed release, NFL Blitz 2000 on the DC is going to be the masterstroke of them all, thanks to the storage capacity of a single GD-rom and the quick processing power the DC delivers. This is enabling Midway to port a carbon copy of the NFL Blitz '99 game.

In fact, in its current state, Blitz 2000 seems to be running the arcade code: It holds a Free Play credit status, and hitting the start button four times will allow a complete game. None of the options for Season or Tournament play are implemented and stopping to pause the game and jot down some notes is out of the question. Go figure. Of course, these options will obviously be available in the final version.

In any case the game's completely playable, and as in every other game on the DC, expect the pupils of your eyes to open to an inebriated state and soak in everything happening on the screen. Blitz 2000 is beautiful—and it had better be, since it will undoubtedly be directly compared to its arcade predecessor. The player models are strong and extremely well animated, and it seems that nothing has been compromised in terms of detail and motion. However, it seems Midway could have easily thrown in some extra goodies in terms of backgrounds, extra tackle situations or even an opening CG movie. The extra features are adequate, but by no means exceptional.

The furious nature of the game is top notch. No hiccups or graphic breakups could be found, but an incidental flicker flashes away in the end zone. There is absolutely none of the jerking animation that can be easily seen on the other versions, especially while the players are at the line. Collision detect seems to be a bit tighter than in other versions, which is, of course, good, though the game's 60 fps makes it tough to catch any subtleties. But no worry, because there is absolutely nothing subtle about this intense game of football.

There are some contrary opinions, but it would be unfair to address them in the game's current state. It will be interesting to see how they handle the weather effects; hopefully these won't be an afterthought. Start saving your quarters.



SOUL CALIBUR

BY BRADY FIECHTER

above and beyond a simple port

namco tears apart the dc hardware to produce a 3d marvel

"That is absolutely amazing." So goes the typical response to the visually striking Soul Calibur, Namco's arcade-to-Dreamcast fighting title that redefines the limits of 3D combat. For its richness of imagery alone, Soul Calibur humbles its arcade counterpart – a remarkable achievement for console video game development.

With new, unfamiliar technology comes a heightened interest in what a game looks like as much as how it plays, and every detail can be met with a sense of awe. Take, for instance, the very opening of Soul Calibur, an evocative scene in which Kilik, a quick and agile fighter who brandishes a long staff, gracefully performs a beautiful choreography of motions. The precision and flowing elegance of the game's motion capturing, the fullness and detail of the polygonal models, and the artistic richness Namco possesses are effectually told in this short introduction.

There's so much visual stimulus to enjoy that any lack of deep gameplay would almost be forgiven, yet, as expected from a Namco fighter, the game has more ambition than outward appearance, and the formidable arcade gameplay seems to be preserved. Like its predecessor, Soul Calibur draws its method of combat from guard-heavy perrying and intense weapons clashing, with four basic sets of commands dictating the rhythmic chain of attacks.

One of the more notable aspects of this Dreamcast version of the game is the uncommon sense of 3D, heightened by an analog-movement system that allows full range of freedom through the arena.

With sensational throws and more calculated combos elevating the gameplay past the original, it is uncertain just what the final version will bring in terms of any additional improvements. Outside of gameplay, other areas are also being attended to: Never satisfied to rest on just good enough, Namco continually imbues its fighting games with plenty of extras, and in addition to little touches such as animation on garments and hair there is good possibility of new fighters, extra modes of play, and stellar use of opening and closing cinemas.





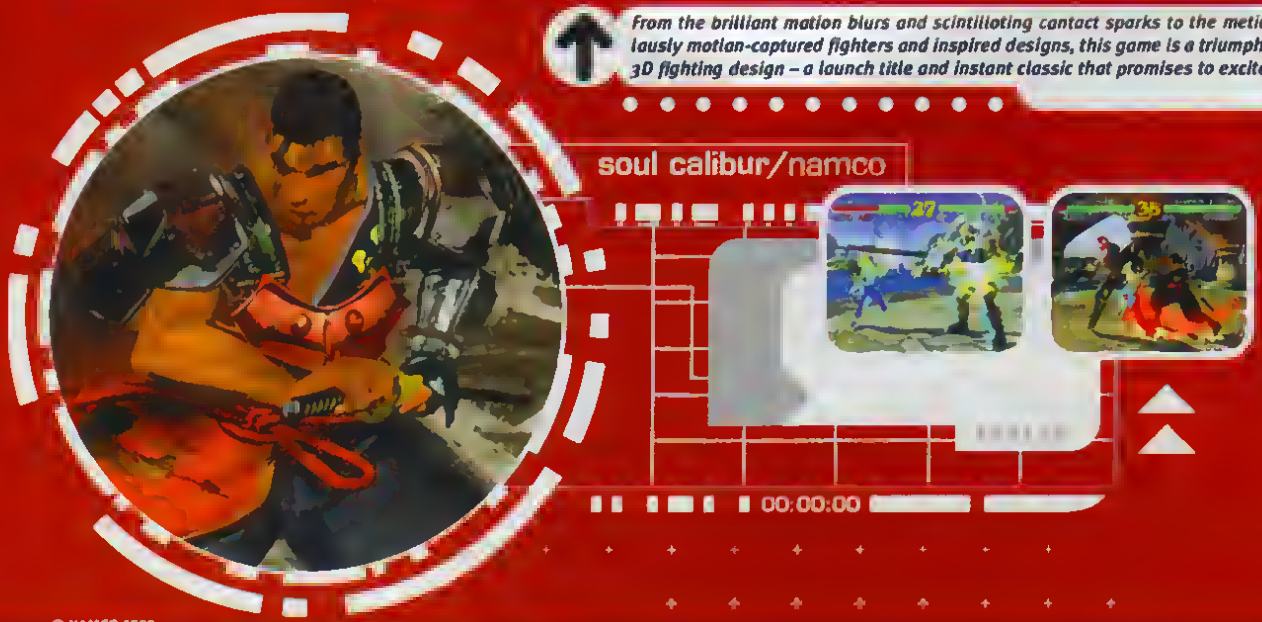








From the brilliant motion blurs and scintillating contact sparks to the meticulously motion-captured fighters and inspired designs, this game is a triumph in 3D fighting design – a launch title and instant classic that promises to excite.



© NAMCO 1999





dreamcast enhancements abound

1101001

cleaner effects, extra animation, stunning resolution

Soul Calibur's fighting style may not radiate mass appeal, but there is no avoiding a game of this stature. Most gamers will marvel at the intricacies—the emoting of meticulously rendered facial expressions, the sparkle of sunlight on the edges of an exposed blade, the condensed moisture from a fighter's breath—and be wowed by the incredible motion blurs and brilliant contact sparks. And commanding one of the most impressive character models to appear in a video game, the hulking giant Astoroth, who swings an enormous battle axe, is just an awesome sight.

As a complete package, Soul Calibur is exactly what the Dreamcast needs to compliment its eclectic launch—a gamer's game that is an exquisite marriage of sound, gameplay, and graphics. Of course, as we enter the second generation of Dreamcast titles, we'll undoubtedly look back on this game and be quick to point out how the backdrops are actually simplistic and the characters are, in fact, blocky. But for now, marvel at the dawn of 128-bit gaming.















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EARTHWORM JIM 3D



Interplay may have let the warm aut the bag a little too early an Eorthworm Jim 3D, releasing mock-up shots when it wos little mare than a design schemotic. The game has seemingly had unrealistic release dates attached to it since the day it was announced. Meanwhile, having been chasen ta create the first nan-Shiny, non-2D Jim, Scattish developers VIS Interactive obviously had no intention of rushing ta make a deadline, and let Interploy soy whatever they wanted while toiling away an the game until they were satisfied they had captured the essence af Jim. The game needed the extended tweaking phase, too. The versian I played at last year's E3 wasn't even close to doing the EWJ name justice, and sa however they all warked it aut, I'm happy that one of my favorite characters is getting the respect he deserves. The original EWJ launched a campany (and several pramising careers), spawned a TV show and toy line, and made a truckload af green, after all. Samewhere in the mix Interplay made a deal with Rockstar for the U.S. rights and sa naw they will complete the task af getting VIS ta wrap it up, then market the crap out af it far a September release.

take2

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ewj3D





take2/ROCKSTAR





EWJ 3D is now an N64 exclusive! So 64 fans will be partying alone on this one. The PS and PC versions have been put out to pasture. There may still be Jim games for either or, but they won't be by VIS and they won't be this game – or so I'm told.

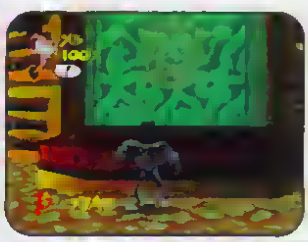
earthworm jim 3d

take2/rockstar

EWJ

So what's the big to-do about, you ask? Well, quite simply, one of the most original, entertaining, and funny 3D action/adventure/platforming games you're likely to ever play on the Nintendo 64. This game kicks tail in so many ways I don't know where to begin. But the Farm seems as good a place as any, so let's start there. First and Foremost (that's a dairy joke), Jim 3D is funny. Not a lame attempt at amusement, mind you: it's really funny. The first area you encounter, traversing Jim's twisted mind (he's lost his marbles after being conked on the head by a falling cow while filming his latest feature), is Barn to be Wild. The first thing you'll find here, after realizing this game looks really freakin' awesome for a non-Ram-Pak'd 64 game, is a gun that shoots eggs and goes "Ba-Gok!" when you shoot it. The first character you'll meet is a chicken spy from Bratislava who works for the C.I.A. (Cow Infiltration Army). He's there to rescue the chicken army general who's been captured by Psycrow on his way to the peace talks. To fulfill his first mission Jim will need to attend three secret meetings, complete a grueling assault course, obtain the peace treaty, and free the general. All the while, Psycrow's soldiers, fat crows, and beefy steers fire away at Jim as he traverses the impressive barnyard terrain. Homing Eggs take down rocket-wielding fat crows, but killing steers is cooler yet. The butcher-knife gun lops their heads clean off, revealing the neck bone within as they pop











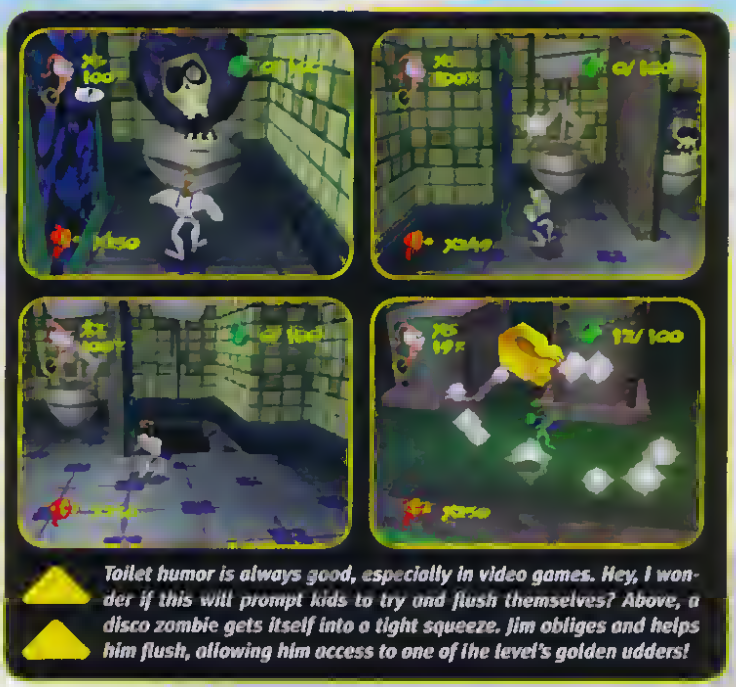




into the air before the limp carcass hits the dirt! To avoid enemy fire, Jim can now tuck and roll, and this maneuver is key to staying alive in level one. You can't fire while crouched, so the strategy is to pop up and launch the blade between the steer's shots. The music in this level, a twangy tongue-in-cheek hoe-down, is a kick, and like I said, you won't believe how clean the visuals are. The levels are quite big in nature, you can look anywhere at any time, ala Mario 64 (and any other 3D adventure worth its salt), and there's not a hint of fog. The models are excellent, too. Jim especially looks really good for how complex of a character he is. He animates extremely well, is totally solid, and detailed down to his big green left eye. Leave him idle and he'll whip out his wormy head and use it as a hulahoop—very impressive for a polygonal idle. Even close up, the models in this game look fantastic.

The other two levels on our preview cart—Poultrygeist and Boogie Nights of the Living Dead—looked and played equally well. In Poultrygeist, which takes place in a huge, nicely detailed haunted mansion, one of Jim's tasks (when he's not baiting killer vacuums with exploding bananas) is to help out the Ghost of Baroness Beaver-for-a-Head, Professor Monkey-for-a-Head's Great Aunt. She has a solo to perform at the Elvis reunion party, but the

Continued on page 125 ▸



Toilet humor is always good, especially in video games. Hey, I wonder if this will prompt kids to try and flush themselves? Above, a disco zombie gets itself into a tight squeeze. Jim obliges and helps him flush, allowing him access to one of the level's golden udders!

FINAL FANTASY VIII

BY MIKE HOBBS

Final Fantasy is set to conquer another continent this September, when the fully localized eighth installment of Square's legendary series arrives domestically. Square EA were kind enough to send us a translated first disc with around twelve hours of gameplay available, and I was not let down. A richer and more emotionally complex adventure thus far than FFVII, Square's latest opus is a departure in many ways, yet manages to provide a similarly enrapturing experience. It still has the resonance of a Final Fantasy.

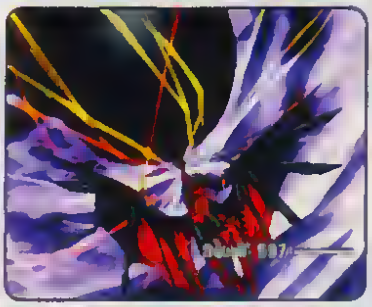
Superficially, the biggest change here is the absence of super deformed representational figures, as characters always appear normally proportioned. While some (probably not many) will bemoan the shift, it creates a mature-feeling experience, one that may appeal to American gamers that much more. I found the little models in FFVII endearing, but I understand the need and desire for this shift.

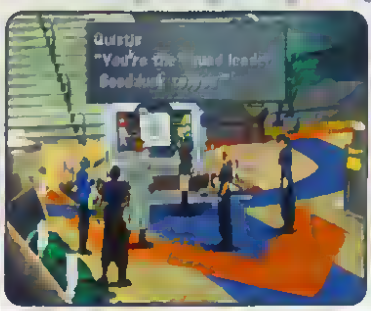
Numerous changes are also to be found in the call spell and magic areas. To put it simply, you no longer have magic points and you can basically throw call spells, now christened Guardian Forces, till the cows come home. Magic is obtained by drawing different spells from enemies or finding draw points scattered throughout the game. As long as you keep drawing, you keep a supply of spells on hand. The Guardian Forces can be used indefinitely, operating on a hit point system, taking damage as they charge their attacks. There's more obviously, but that's all you need to know for now.

As for the story so far, which I'll not spoil, in words or in shots, I can only say that it is very good, with well developed characters and, best of all, some great action set pieces woven throughout the plot. Here, Square pull out all the stops with FMV of the most insane order and even George Lucas-style intercutting of concurrent events towards the end of disc one.

FFVIII is destined to be huge, but it's destined to be great as well. That rarified mix of mass appeal and genuine quality is coming from Square this September.

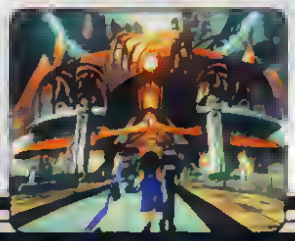


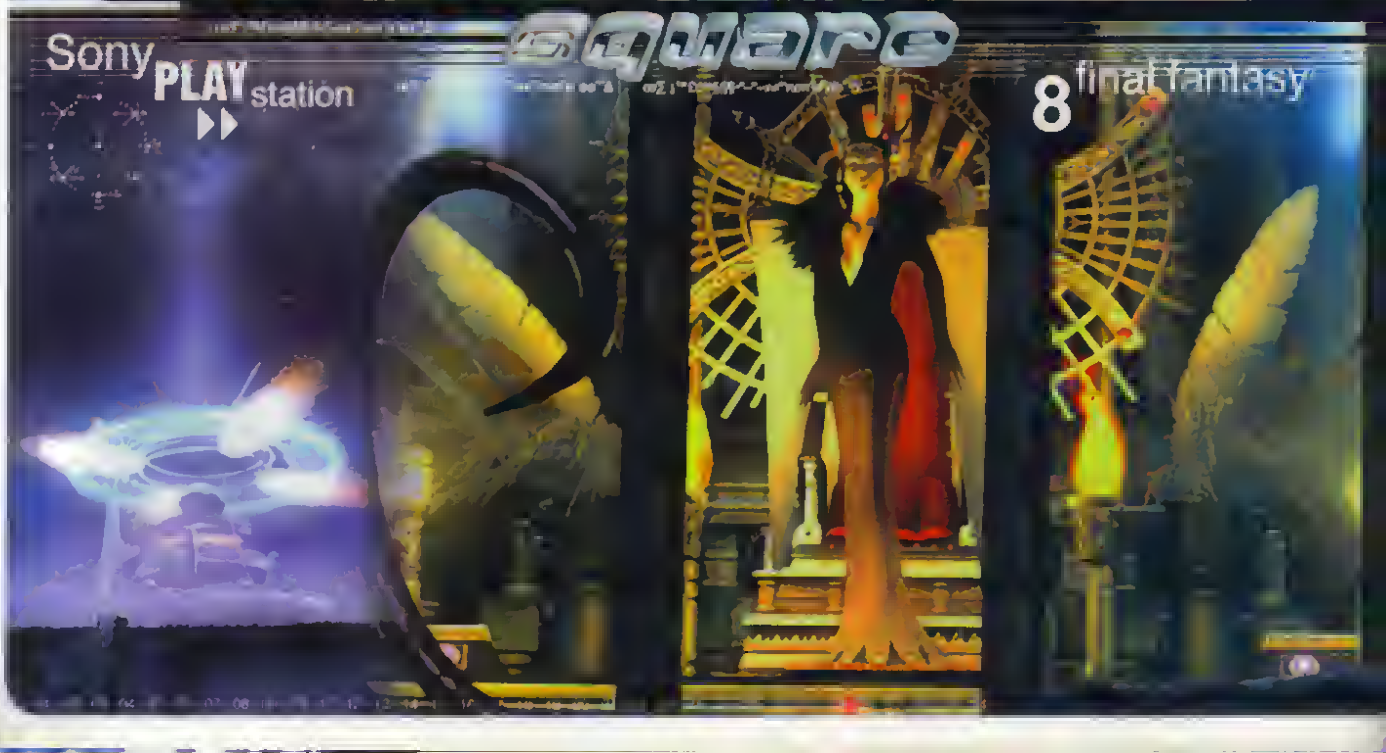










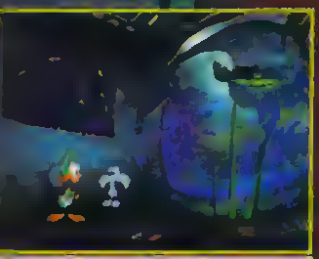


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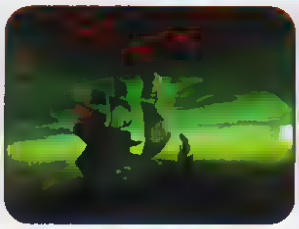
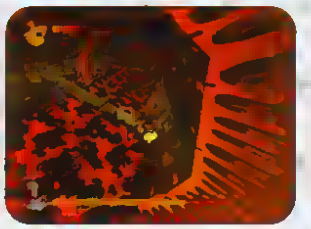
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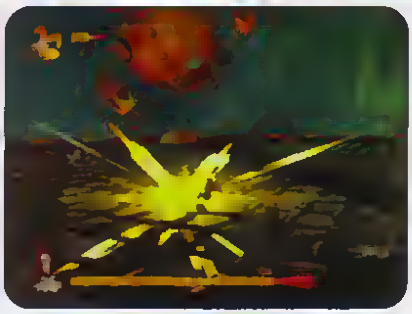
PlayStation

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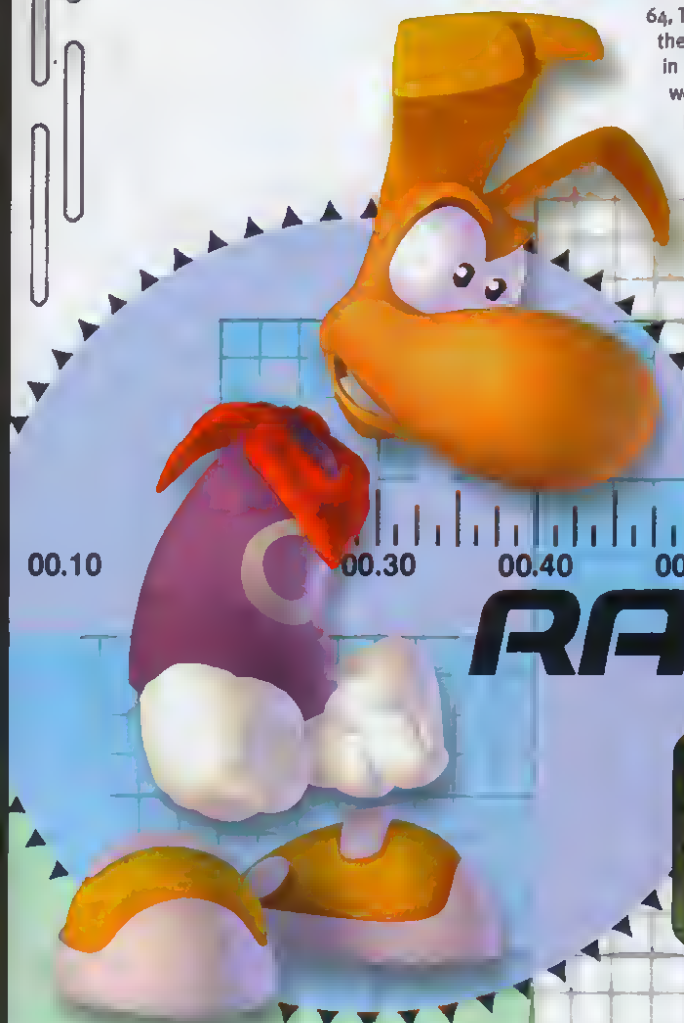







With Rayman 2–The Great Escape, Ubi Soft prove once and for all...

They have the right stuff when it comes to critters!

First of all, I must say that this has been my kind of month. I'm almost beside myself with glee. In the span of one issue I've already had a go at EWJ 3D, Tarzan, Ape Escape, and Tonic Trouble. As a critter game/platforming junkie I am in heaven. And now, to top it all off, a 75-percent-complete version of Rayman shows up! What's better, still to come this year – Jet Force Gemini, DK 64, Tomba 2, and the tweaked Sonic Adventure. Pinch me! As good as the 64 has been for 3D action and adventure, when you see Rayman in action you may not believe your eyes. I am nearly at a loss for words on this one folks, and I have a big mouth when it comes to platforming. Let me just say, If you own a 64 and you don't play Rayman, you might as well turn the thing in. Since we ran our cover story, much has taken place in the world of Rayman, as the game has now really begun to take shape. No longer a disjointed array of level selects, the scenarios, albeit not final, can be followed, and, for the first time, we're able to get an idea of what the Rayman universe will be like in the third dimension. Without sounding too fruity, I can only describe it as a





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RAYMAN 2

BY DAVE HALVERSON






Enter the enchanting world of Rayman and experience one of the greatest platformers of the decade...

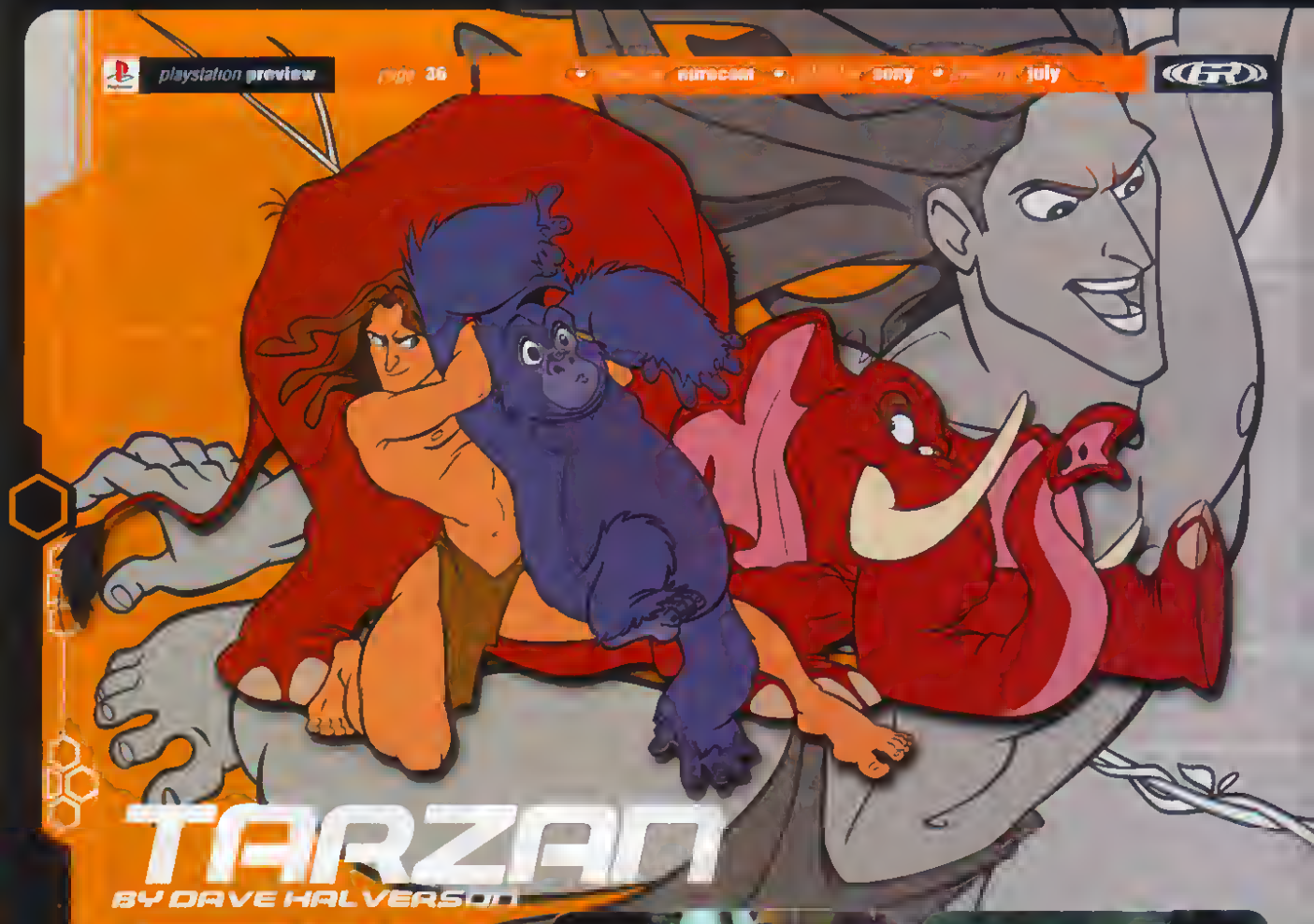


living fairytale. Like a Tolkein novel or Frazetta painting, the game transcends age. it's simply a wondrous excursion. The character design and art are so appealing that it's no wonder that Rayman is becoming a TV series. i just pray they do it justice and grant it the same care exhibited here.

Captured by the Pirates of Oblivion, we find Rayman holed up in the hull of Razor Beard's floating Admiral ship awaiting his fate with the rest of the prisoners. Razor Beard aims on selling the inhabitants of Rayman's world to the intergalactic Circus, and without his magic Rayman is powerless against them. It seems all is lost, when an unexpected friend drops in (well, he's actually dragged in) sent by the fairy Ly. it's no accident that Globox was captured and brought into the ship's hold. He's brought with him just enough Lums Energy to give Rayman the power to set them both free and begin his counter attack against the pirates...

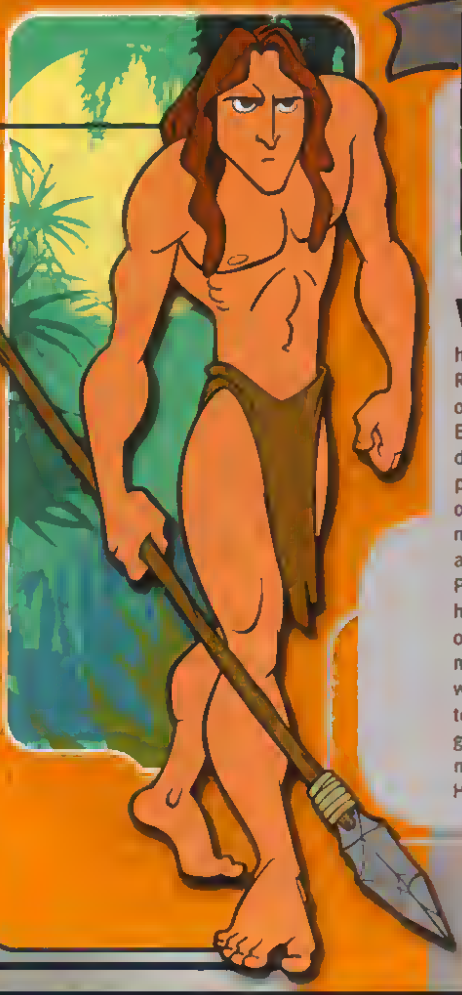
Once back on the surface, Rayman begins his adventure by collecting enough yellow lums for the small beings to get him to the Fairy Hollow. Between here and your first confrontation with Ly, weaving through the first outer mazes and damp corridors of the pirates lair, you begin to get a sense of just how special this game is. The control is

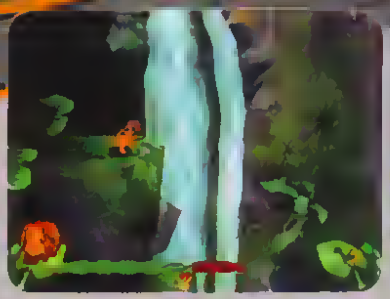
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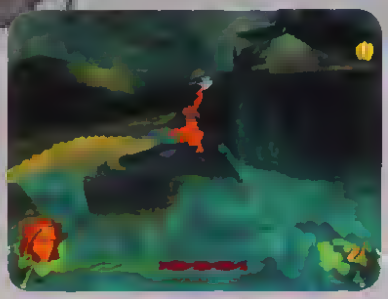


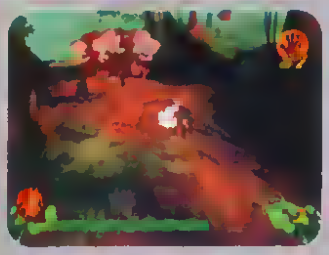
TARZAN

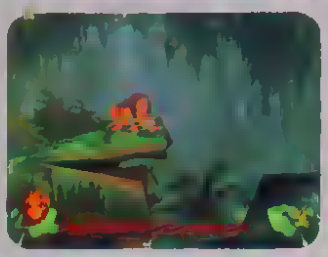
BY DAVE HALVERSON







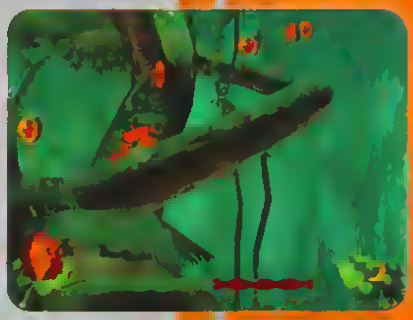




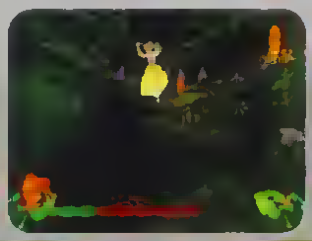
What looks to be Disney's greatest animated adventure yet for people over the age of 10 has a game as noteworthy attached to it. Reminiscent of those great Virgin movie games of old like Terminator, Aladdin, and Jungle Book, Eurocom have taken that tried-and-true hand-drawn 2D formula and wrapped it in a spectacular polygonal package. Even the black screen game-over animations and spelling of the character's name in each level have made the transition. We've all seen plenty of 2D polygonal games, though, like Pandemonium, Contra, Jurassic Park, etc., but none have been as scenic and playable as this, in my opinion. Tarzan is as beautiful a game as it is a movie. Poised amongst the cliffs before a powerful waterfall, playing as the young Tarzan, one is given to pause and reflect on just how fantastic video games have become. Besides the inspiring 2D elements, borrowing a little from the noteworthy Hercules game for PS, Tarzan also boasts an assort-

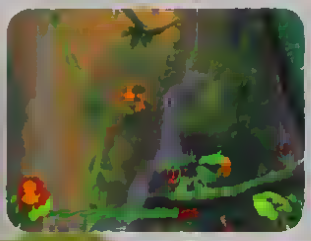
ment of impressive 3D levels. Since this preview came to us prior to the movie's opening, I haven't yet seen the film, but judging by the many incredible animation breaks as the game progresses, I'm beginning to get a good idea of what the movie's about. Acceptance, love, loss, triumph—all of those classic Disney traits are here in great effect. You get to play as just about every character in the movie, too—something totally new in the Disney universe.

The gameplay is reminiscent of Pandemonium, with multiple paths and plains within each polygonal environment, only in Tarzan there are more ways to attack and the armature and branching out within each level is more in depth. Tarzan can collect and throw four different varieties of deadly fruit, and once he's located his arrowhead he can stab at the jungle's many pesky inhabitants in two ways with either shoulder button. Besides all manner of ground-level beasties, enemies of the flying kind are the most menacing, as they must be avoided; they choose the most inconvenient times to hover about. Tarzan can also pound the ground ape-style to open up the jungle's many hollows which usually contain health, fruit and one of the letters needed to spell Tarzan and get the end level bonus. The models in the game are yet another delight and the artisans at Eurocom aren't afraid to show them off. Something that has always bothered me about this genre is the way that characters break up and distort when brought in close. The models in Tarzan look solid no matter how close they come in towards the screen. (Tomorrow's hardware will thankfully put an end to this problem altogether.) The soundtrack is mostly very good, if not too light in some areas, but the game is early, so perhaps it will be beefier in the final game. Other flaws, based on my early experience at the controls: some of the reaction times are a tad slow, especially in the Crash Bandicoot-style chase scenes, and jumping just at the edge of a ledge seems maybe a fraction of a second off—easily fixable last minute tweaks. Otherwise, Tarzan is a spectacular-looking game that looks poised to represent one of the finest animated films of the decade very well. ⚡











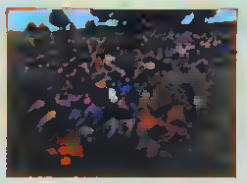


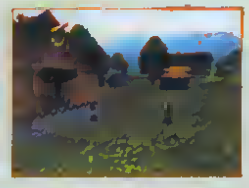




BRAVEHEART

• developer: red lemon studios • publisher: eidos • available: q2 '99





PC CD ROM

Braveheart, RTS, and war history fans rejoice! Finally a quality game is being made on the classic-to-be movie about war-torn Scotland's fight for independence in the absence of a true king. Braveheart from Red Lemon and Eidos is a respectably deep (although some of the resource optimization can be automated for those wishing to brain and sprain) combination 2D turn based strategic war planner and real-time 3D massive battle simulation. Although the player can also forego this frenzied folly if he values the intellectual over the instinctual, the well-rounded gamer should have a bloody field day invading his rival clans' cities, cutting off their resources, spying their activities, and then unleashing a berserker blitz firsthand as they scramble for cover.




Braveheart sports an impressive 3D engine that renders the geography of the entire UK, touted as being accurate to 50 meters, in every weather/time condition imaginable. All the soldiers are 3D (no 2D sprite cop-outs here), but Eidos still claims to heve battles with hundreds (yes, there's an "s" on the end) of characters and units. There are over twenty different troop types including siege towers, catapults, and berserkers. You can choose your leader's persona by selecting the clan they lead; each of the sixteen major clans has its own strengths, weaknesses, and starting location.

You are attempting to unify Scotland and defeat the English invaders for good. During the epic quest to free and secure the land of your people you will tax and trade for funds, make alliances, bribe opposing clan leaders, engage in espionage, and cause tons of bloodshed. Make no mistake about it: lots of polygon people go down in this one. Ah, but there is nothing like seeing the siege of a thirteenth century castle from the eyes of a Scottish warrior, and, as far as I can tell, there is no war game out now that is as comprehensive as Breveheart.



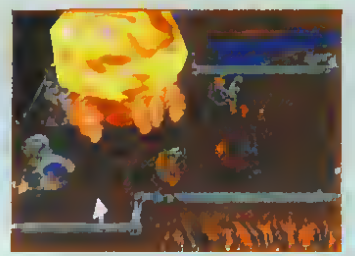


COMMAND & CONQUER

• developer: looking glass studios/electronic arts • publisher: nintendo • available: June 26

The popularity of the real-time strategy genre is confirmed as Nintendo jumps on the bandwagon to publish a 3D version of Command & Conquer for the N64. C&C, a one-player-only game on the 64, will feature all of the original missions from the PC version, as well as several exclusive missions. Look for a full review of this exalted RTS title next month.





DEMOLITION RACER

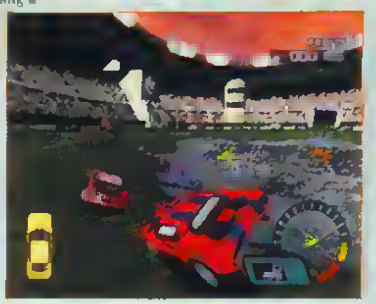
• developer: pitbull syndicate • publisher: infogrames • available: sept

This latest version of Demolition Racer includes many more playable tracks than before, including the cool full-length, branching courses that Pitbull Syndicate and Accolade have been focusing on (in their racing titles) as of late. Unfortunately only two cars offered complete damage models in this build of the game, and sadly both are limited to simple (horrific) color palettes. This new version is a serious step for the game regardless, as it bears testament to the strength of the track design thus far.




Members of the famous Destruction Derby team are developing DR. These guys have come to grips with complex physics engines and damage models in the past, and they're applying their expertise to Demolition Racer using a stripped down, re-tooled version of the current Test Drive PS engine. This engine generates a lot of environment at once, as demonstrated in DR's cool Bowl stages. This is where some of the most satisfying Demolition takes place, in its purest form (as opposed to Racing), as cars chase each other down like feral dogs before a packed stadium of onlookers. As a side note, you can play the bowl stages using a very cool overhead view, like those old-school arcade derby games. Get a good steering wheel controller (if that even exists) and you're in business! The other full-length racing tracks are fast, filled with jumps, shortcuts, and painful corners to maneuver as you bash your opponents across the roadway.

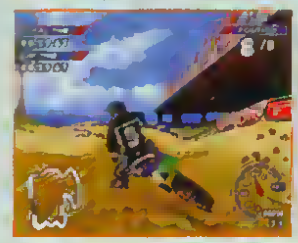
Well, enjoy the new shots and check back with us for the next update.




CHAMPIONSHIP MOTOCROSS FEATURING RICKY CARMICHAEL

• developer: eurocom • publisher: thq • available: july

Funcom's nimble Motocross game has finally landed a home, and a license with none other then THQ and Ricky Carmichael. A smart acquisition, RC MX is set to do some major business. The game still hes some issues like computer AI/belance and collision, but overall it looks poised to easily overtake last year's Jeremy McGrath Supercross for the PS crown. Admittedly, I still think Playmate's VMX had a more realistic, natural feel, but that game lacked depth, some thing RC seems to have in droves. EA's Supercross 2000 is also due out this year, as is McGrath '99, so MX fans have a lot to look forward to. We'll have more on all of this year's MX crop in the September issue.



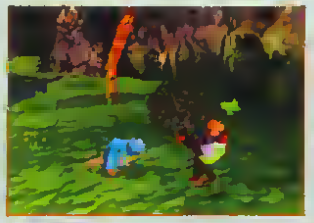




DONKEY KONG 64

• developer/publisher: rare/nintendo • available: november 22

One of the best years for action-platform games in the history of gaming has yet to bear its sweetest fruit.. benanas. Donkey Kong 64 will likely be Nintendo's crowning jewel of '99 as it's set to follow another soon-to-be legend, Jet Force Gemini, and arrive just in time for the holiday rush, with a scheduled release date of November 22. Expect to see all of your favorite apes, along with, of course, Donkey and Diddy, as you roam through the Kongo Jungle performing all manner of ape-like maneuvers (can you tell I'm stretching?), including some new ones like Tiny, Lanky, and Chunky. I hope someone told Cranky about this. He doesn't like surprises!



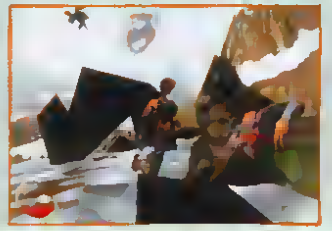

DRAKAN

• developer: surreal software • publisher: psygnosis • available: summer

The latest version of Drakan finally offers a solid level structure, complete with puzzles and intermissions, and the graphics seem to be pretty much done. The game is still in a pre-beta state, which means I'm pushing through incomplete intermissions and haphazard collision, among other minor problems, but this is the first time I've been able to play through complete levels, and it's definitely enjoyable.

Drakan, being developed by Surreal Software, tells a classic fantasy tale about the alliance of men and dragon, the dissension that broke this trust, and the heroes of both races who rose above these sinister schemes to defeat the evil forces. As beautiful young Rynn (Lara Croft in medieval leather), you find your village in ruins after a swift and deadly attack by the new evil that has surfaced throughout the land. As you make your escape from the village you'll witness savage murders, helpless in the face of a huge and merciless enemy force.

On the way through the fully playable levels I discovered excellent voice acting and a fine script, a silky smooth, extremely well-lit engine, and very cool (both subtle and mystical) puzzles. I've witnessed weak enemy guards running for help when you arrive on the scene, returning with tougher, well-armed fighters. I've been forced into difficult jumping and attacking routines, using Rynn's excellent sidelong rolls, flips, and instant blocking to avoid and fend off hordes of drooling beasts armed with vicious spiky clubs. All this, before I get to ride a magnificent dragon through giant canyons launching streams of fire! It's been fun, aesthetically the game is coming along very well, and I'm interested in the plot. In the words of Busta' Rhymes, Gimme some more!

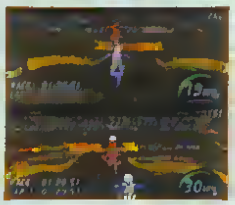
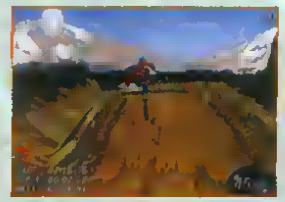
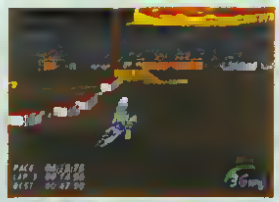


EXCITEBIKE

• developer: left field • publisher: nintendo • available: december

Back when Nintendo was still a relatively unknown arcade manufacturer, they made a great arcade machine called the Nintendo Player's Choice, featuring 10 different games including the first motorcycle racing game, Excitebike.

As is Nintendo, Excitebike 64 is all grown up. Seen on videotape at E3, the game now sports a beefy 3D engine and stellar realism. With advanced physics models and animations, four-player action, a comprehensive track editor and a variety of bikes to choose from, we will be closely following the release of this long overdue sequel.

FATAL FURY: WILD AMBITION

• developer/publisher: snk/ea • available: fall

Ever wondered what the Neo Geo 64 was like? Well, wait no more! EA has a near perfect port of Fatal Fury Wild Ambition ready for you to pound this fall. Wild Ambition offers 14 characters from the vast Fatal Fury universe, including 2 new characters exclusive to the PS version, each with over 30 moves and, of course, combos aplenty. Gameplay modes include Arcade, Vs., Team Battle, and Training. There's also a developing story for each character. More soon. ❦







FLOIGAN BROS.

• developer: visual concepts • publisher: sega • available: 2000

Here's what I know about Floigan Bros. It looks friggin' awesome! Seriously, little is known about Visual Concepts' first Dreamcast platformer but in the hands of the team responsible for the highly underrated ONE, I feel justified in saying that this is going to be one spectacular game. We'll keep you posted as information develops ❦





GAUNTLET LEGENDS

• developer/publisher: midway • available: fall

Back in the mid-1980s, Gauntlet was released in the arcades and caused a major frenzy amongst the arcade-going sects. The original actually had two aspects that put it in the video game Hall of Fame. first, its four-player, simultaneous brand of play, and second, its Dungeons and Dragons-arcade feel, which had never been seen before. As the game's four characters—an elf, a warrior, a valkyrie and a wizard—progressed through each maze to reach the exit, they battled what seemed like hundreds of enemies. Back then, the arcade-to-home conversion was less than stellar due to the technology of the time although a meaty Genesis version did surface over time.

The new Gauntlet Legends arcade game is pretty remarkable in its own right, but what makes the lineage so brilliant this time is that not only is the arcade-to-home conversion surprisingly faithful, but it may even be better, in some ways, than its arcade father. The great graphics, the classic gameplay, the extras, the quarters you will save we'll bring you an in-depth look as soon as the finished game arrives ❦







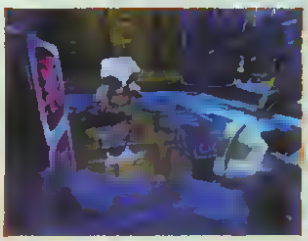
JET FORCE GEMINI

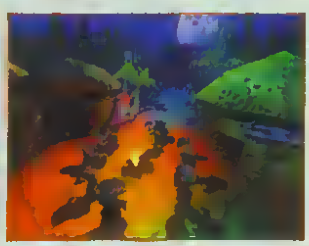
• developer: rare • publisher: nintendo • available: august 30

Outside of Nintendo's own game designers, nobody has more N64 expertise and offers more innovations than RARE, as they've shown with such benchmark titles as GoldenEye 007, Diddy Kong Racing and Banjo-Kazooie. In 1999, the company is poised to wow the masses with Jet Force Gemini, the first of a powerhouse lineup of games that also includes Donkey Kong 64 and Perfect Dark.

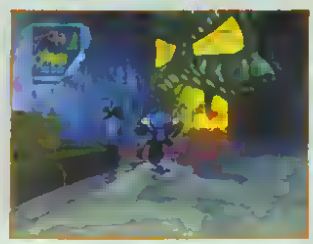
The lighting effects and color schemes in JFG are some of the coolest outside of Zelda 64, and they are spread throughout a whopping 120 stages. Juno, Vela, and their dog Lupus are the main characters and are used alternately in order to complete the adventure. In addition to the one-player action/adventure game, Rare's including the requisite multi-player mode, as well as a two-player cooperative mode. ❦





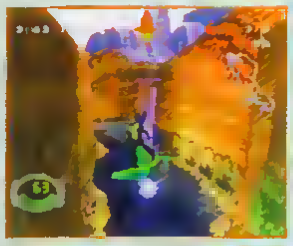






JET MOTO 3

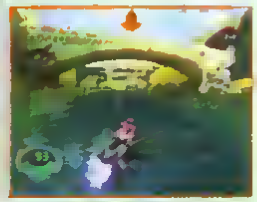
• developer: 989 studios • publisher: sces • available: september

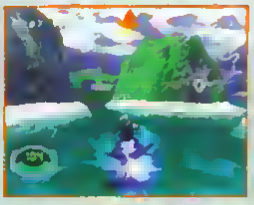


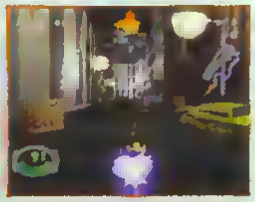
Anytime a game title has a "3" attached to its name there had better be something unique going on to justify it. Jet Moto 3, the benchmark in hover bike racing games that started it all, is sporting a new 3D engine, improved artificial intelligence, and an advanced physics technology that will allow players to feel every jolt as they race through the 16 different courses, each with a variety of terrain, like water, sand, ice and concrete. Expect shortcuts galore this time as well.

There will be 11 different bikes to choose from, each with different levels of performance—acceleration, top speed and handling—to give each a unique feel. The advanced artificial intelligence will create more difficult computer-controlled racers for players to deal with, and the game will include three different one-player modes with four difficulty settings, and two different two-player modes. Completing the Expert level on the Season mode opens up the Stunt mode, allowing access to more difficult tracks. It's gonna' be good









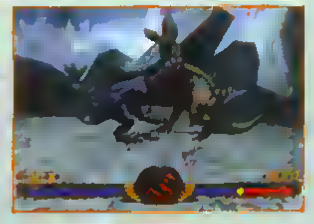
JURASSIC PARK: WARPATH

• developer/publisher: dreamworks • available: fall

Ea/Dreamworks hope to capture that feeling you got at the end of *Jurassic Park* when the T-Rex let out that mighty bone chilling roar. Imagine controlling that beast! Well, we're about to get that chance, if they'd only send us the friggin' game! It certainly looks interesting in these new shots. We can't wait to sink our claws into the actual game, which has an impressive and extensive list of features. Stay tuned.







KONAMI ARCADE CLASSICS

• developer/publisher: konami • available: september

Whether you are an older or younger gamer, it's important every now and then to take a trip back to the days of yesteryear and play (or replay, as the case may be) the games upon which this industry was built. Although, to give you a fair warning, as it was then and as it is now, not all of the games released were good enough to be called "classics."



Which brings us to the Konami Arcade Classics, a collection of 10 games included on one disc to provide a wide variety of gaming experiences. The games included are faithful re-releases of the arcade machines you might have pumped quarters into so many years ago: Circus Charlie; Time Pilot; Scramble; Gyrus, Pooyan, a humorous wolf versus pig game; Road Fighter, Roc'n Rope, Shao Lin's Road, Super Cobra, the predecessor for the ultra-successful Gradius series; and Yei Ar Kung Fu, one of the first fighting games to include a life meter and joystick-button combo controls. Each of the games will come complete whh the original in-game artwork, as well as the original software bugs.



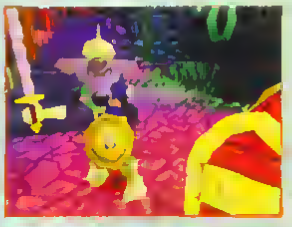


KINGSLEY

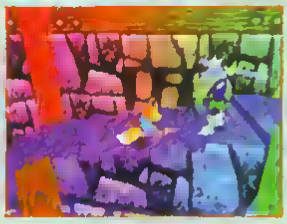
• developer/publisher: psygnosis • available: Fall

After the poor showing Rascal had, I thought I'd seen the last of this engine, but lo and behold they're giving it another whirl, but this time aiming at a significantly younger demographic. Odder still, Rascal moved at 60 frames and by my estimation looked and played better. Kingsley's not finished yet, so whether it's a better game remains to be seen. Tune in next month for the full scoop









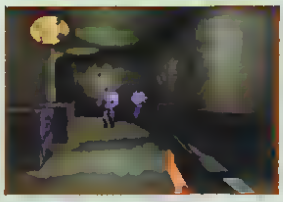






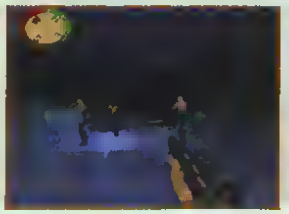
MEDAL OF HONOR

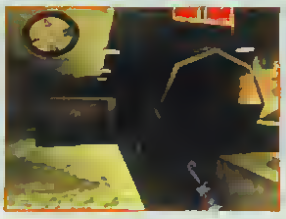
• developer/publisher: electronic arts • available: fall

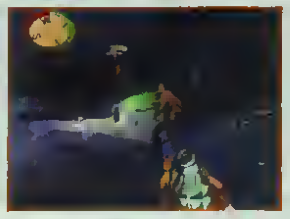


In Medal of Honor, a first-person shooter from Electronic Arts, you experience the fight against the Nazis in World War II, as the game drops you behind German lines the night before June 6, 1944 – D-Day.

As an elite Special Forces agent, you will come face-to-face with 20 different types of opponents as you carry out 11 different missions through 30 levels. Arm yourself with 14 different WWII-era weapons as you tackle missions that include commando raids, search-and-rescue missions and covert operations. The game will also include multiple two-player modes to battle with a friend against those fiendish Nazis.







POKEMON SNAP

• developer/publisher: nintendo
• available: july 26

What would you say about a game that allowed you to travel around an island where the objective is to search out and take pictures of those cute, little Pokemon characters? If you said, "Give it to me," I present to you Pokemon Snap. Only for Nintendo 64





PAC MAN WORLD

• developer: namco hometek • publisher: namco • available: october '99

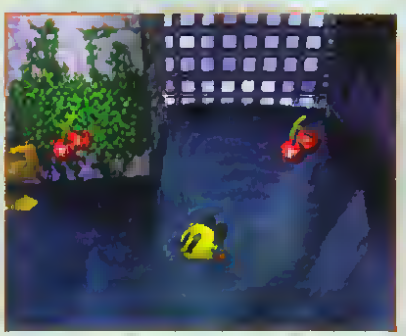
You can bet pretty good money that if a game of old was a hit you will see it redone to spark the memories of gamers and fill the wallets of publishers. This is not a bad thing, though sometimes a slick new update can drag the original through the mud. Being the first game from Namco Hometek for the PlayStation, the pellet poppin' man of Pac is ready to waka his way through each and every mascot that dares to stand in his way. The name of the game has gone under some minor alterations, but thankfully nothing else.

The game still looks to hold the aspects and excitement of the original Pac Man. There are still ghosts to steer clear of, unless, that is, you just inhaled a Power Pellet. Thrown into the mix are new enemies to keep things interesting, and Pac can use the pellets he has collected to toss at his foes. One well-placed pellet will knock enemies into pieces, or Pac can even Butt Bounce off the heads of his adversaries—he has definitely learned a trick or two. Fruit can be found in abundance and collecting them will be requisite for bonus items. So as you can tell, the concept of Pac Man is strongly evident. In fact, the man himself is still a sprite. He's sprouted some beneficial limbs in poly form though. Good for him.



There are three different game modes, two of which are familiar. The first is the original Pac Man; most of you will recognize this one. The second mode is essentially the same. It is called Maze and offers a likely spin on the original, with 3D walls and added dangers such as crashing firebells that rain into the maze. Finally, there is Quest mode, a full-blown adventure that has the little bugger utilizing all of his new abilities, including swimming and rev 'n' dash, where he runs in place to build up speed before slingshoting in whatever direction he facing. Also in the game is mild puzzle solving—one of Pac Man World's main draws—which is well balanced with all manner of technique.

It has been an epic wait, but like any respectable developer should do, Hometek have taken the time to prep their yellow icon to an incredible glow.







PERFECT DARK

• developer: rare • publisher: nintendo • available: december

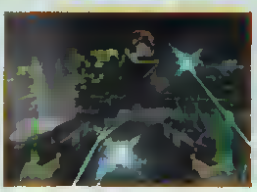
This holiday season, players will be able to ring in the new millennium with Perfect Dark, the highly anticipated game from the design team responsible for the award-winning N64 title GoldenEye 007. The game will run on an updated GE007 engine and will include a character poised to dethrone Lara Croft, Special Agent Joanna Dark.

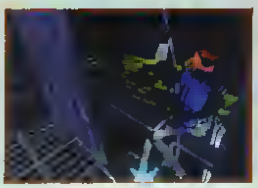
Using enhanced artificial intelligence, the enemies in Perfect Dark will pose a greater challenge than those found in GE007, and will now have a number of unique skills including long-range teamwork, cover recognition and threat assessment. The AI will carry over to the multiplayer mode, as up to four computer-controlled opponents can be added into the melee. Also new to the multi player mode (heck, new to the industry), we hear that by using a Game Boy Camera and a special device not yet available, players will be able to add their own face to a character in the game. Ouch.















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POKEMON STADIUM

• developer/publisher: nintendo • available: october

A huge hit in Japan, Pokemon Stadium will soon be available stateside. A fighting game for up to four players, Pokemon Stadium features all 150 Pokemon battling in beautiful 3D, with stunning visual effects, animation sequences and special attacks. Using the N64 Transfer Pak, players can even download their built up Game Boy Red and Blue Pokemon monsters into Pokemon Stadium.





ROADSTERS '99

• developer/publisher: titus • available: fall

There are already nearly 30 different racing games for the N64, and there are more on the way. After their experience with Automobili Lamborghini, Titus is back at it again with the impending release of Roadsters '99. Originally scheduled for release in December of 1998, the game is now looking at a fall 1999 release date. Roadsters '99 will include 20 different sleek and stylish convertible roadsters, including a black Plymouth Prowler. Titus tells us that the game will include 10 different types of race courses on a picturesque island, through downtown city traffic, across treacherous mountain roads and even on—of all things—a racetrack. The special effects will include real-time skid marks (I'm not touching that one), smoke and snow, along with the requisite instant replay feature and the addition of roadside pit stops. Visually, as you can see, the game is looking gorgeous. Let's hope the final plays as good as it looks.





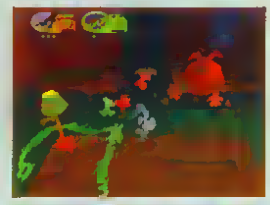


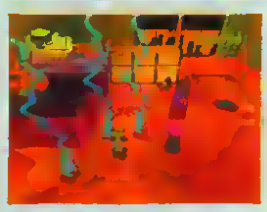
RATT ATTACK

• developer/publisher: midscape • available: summer

Run for the hills! Rat Attack is coming for both Nintendo 64 and PlayStation. Let's just dispense what we know so far: rats invade earth under the leadership of the evil rats, Washington and Jefferson, who have "returned" to earth to seek their revenge. Now rats worldwide are bonding together to overrun the world. Not only that, but Washington and Jefferson's sinister "mutator" rats are doin' the nasty to create even more mutated rats (Earth Rats Are Easy). Enter our heroes, The Scratch Cats—an elite band of feline fighters here to protect the earth.

Rat Attack features a unique mixture of action and puzzle elements, with 101 different levels, bizarre bosses and crazy mini-games. There are eight Scratch Cats to choose from to fend off 10 different types of rats. Lucky for the Scratch Cats, their leader has invented the—get this—eRATicator to help rid earth of the pesky rodents. (sniff, sniff) I can almost smell the cheese from here...





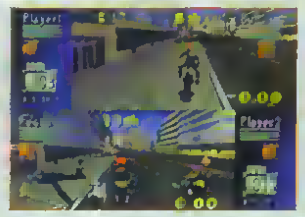


ROAD RASH UNCHAINED

• developer/publisher: ea • available: fall

Ahh, one can never get enough of the Rash. . EA hopes. What have they done to assure us that Stay Puft freshness? Well, for starters they've stuck in a sidecar mode. That oughtta be interesting. There's also improved fighting psychics and all new combo punches (OK, combos in RR? Alrighty) and two new distinct gangs, each with their own brand of moves and weapons. Hey, I just hope it's fast and fun. We'll have more soon.







ROAD RASH 64

• developer: pacific coast power & light • publisher: thq • available: fall

THQ continue their two wheeled roll with the latest version of the now legendary racer/brawler series, Road Rash 64. I'm heppy to say that this is a rash like no other Rash, with an emphasis on weapon usage, and a feel that harkens back to the RR2 Genesis days... That's a very good thing. While the polys don't astound, a hi-res option is in the works and the game is smooth, even when the screen is packed with riders. The details in RR64—like being able to shock your opponents with a stun gun or cattle prod or jam a night stick in their spokes for that extra special scabbing action—add love to the romance of the Rash. The tunes are a real surprise as well, with sampled grunge and Metal a-plenty. You can even scrape the pegs! We'll have a review very soon.











NEW EXTREMES IN URBAN ADVENTURE!!!



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SHADOW MAN

• developer/publisher: acclaim • available: summer

Based on the Acclaim Comics/Hero graphic novel, Shadow Man is the alter ego of Mike LeRoi, an English literature graduate turned hired assassin operating within the dark and seedy underworld of New Orleans. LeRoi has been given the ability to cross over to the Deadside—the realm of the dead—where he becomes an immortal voodoo warrior with astonishing powers.

LeRoi has been chosen to fulfill an ancient apocalyptic prophecy. His mission takes him through a non-linear storyline played out through more than 20 levels set across two worlds. Using unique voodoo weapons, players will help LeRoi solve a variety of puzzles, which include searching serial-killer profiles for elusive clues, as well as uncovering a number of secrets which lead to the prophecy's terrifying and memorable conclusion







R.C. STUNT COPTER

• developer: shiny • publisher: thq • available: fall

David Perry loves radio controlled helicopters, and when you're the head of your own software house, you can make a game like this. R.C. Stunt Copter takes the novel idea of recreating the physics of controlling a radio controlled helicopter and runs with it. Using the PlayStation's Dual Shock pad to cleverly represent a two-stick radio control, the peculiarities of controlling a helicopter are faithfully reproduced. Featuring numerous training sessions and a competitive two player mode, R.C. Stunt Copter should prove to be as challenging as it is fun. Look for this innovative title soon.>k<







STARCRAFT

• developer: blizzard • publisher: nintendo • available: sept 27

Having already established itself as a powerhouse force on the PC, the real-time strategy game StarCraft is headed to Nintendo 64, compliments of Nintendo. Developed by Mass Media for Blizzard Entertainment, the game takes the strategic decision-making, resource mining, war-making concept of Command & Conquer and puts it into the realm of outerspace. Players will become the leader of three different species—the human Terrans, the alien Protoss and the mysterious Zergs—each with unique army attributes.



As with the PC version, the N64 version is played in an overhead, isometric view as players collect minerals and gases, construct buildings, and build and command their troops. Minerals must be harvested to construct more buildings to train more troops to harvest more minerals to construct more buildings to train. .well, you get the idea.

The sprite based graphics allow for a great number of units to be moving about at the same time, carrying out different tasks – harvesting, patrolling, battling, building, etc. There will be a two-player, split-screen cooperative mode for players to battle the computer on custom designed maps





JACKIE CHAN'S STUNTMASTER

• developer: radical • publisher: midway • available: TBA

Since we last had a hands-on preview of Jackie Chan's Stuntmaster, the story and one playable level have changed, but what has remained constant is the game's immense appeal. Come on—who wouldn't want to command the martial art combat of one of film's coolest action stars? For the game's unique, cartoony look, beefy, well-animated characters with exaggerated features are used against backdrops of a dusky city. Chan himself has been motion captured, and his unmistakable movements are captured brilliantly in every punch, kick and jump.

In the one level we played, the game showed appealing signs of a classic Final Fight foundation, underscored by hand-to-hand combat and use of objects as weapons. The expansive 3D environments had multiple paths, lending the game a cool adventure feeling.













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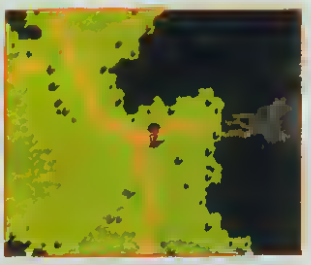
SUIKODEN 2

• developer/publisher: konami • available: august

With its wonderfully classic look, emotionally involving story, huge character list and exquisite score, Suikoden hes yet to be matched by any 32-bit RPG. Of course, that is only my opinion, so if you haven't played the game, find out for yourself. And for Suikoden fans like myself—and anyone with a penchant for a good game—prepare for tha next chapter in the Suikoden senes. I have yet to dig deeply into this much-awaited sequel, but it's fair to say that the spirit of the original is alive and strong. Once again, 108 characters can join your party and wage battle in a tactical-map presentation, and a strong story of friendship and betrayal underpins the adventure.



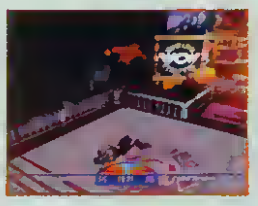




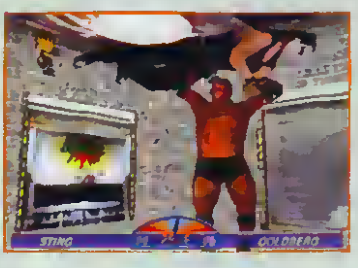
WCW MAYHEM

• developer: kodiak • publisher: ea • available: fall

EA and the WCW have joined forces, as leaders in their respective industries to bring you, the wrestling fans of the United States of America, the greatest wrestling game of all time for the PlayStation and Nintendo 64... at least that's the plan. Here's how they plan to conquer the world .. More than 50 WCW wrestlers are featured along with over (it's always "over" isn't it) 600 motion captured animations providing every lovely wrestler with a unique set of moves including signature taunts and finishing moves. Look for 15 sets as well including Monday Nitro, Thunder, Saturday Night and all 12 PPV settings. I'm running out of real estate fast but even the crowd in this game is cool! We'll have more as it develops



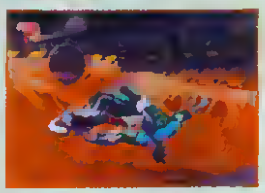


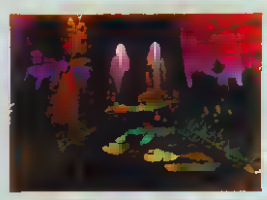


TRICK STYLE

• developer/publisher: criterion • available: fall

Acclaim and Criterion Studios are set to deliver one of tha more interesting alternative racers for the Dreamcast with Trick Style. Set in a post-WWIII, where the sport of gravity surfing has infiltrated the now Utopian world, young male and female Urban Surfers take to the skies, streets and subways on their gravity surf boards. Poised to show off the speed and physics capabilities of Sega's new hardware, the game combines flat-out racing with tricky air-surfing stunts, as players race through futuristic renditions of famous cities such as New York, Tokyo and London. Acclaim claims that players will be able to perform more than 40 stunts such as flips, rolls and spins, that can be combined together to create hundreds more. We can hardly wait. This one looks amazing!





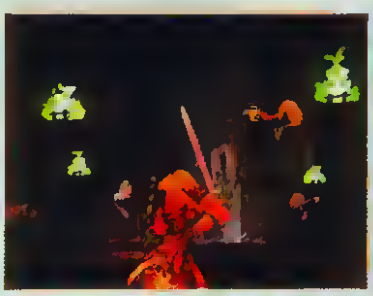


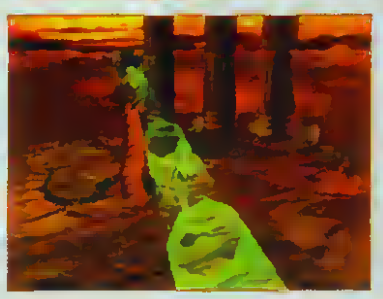
XENA, WARRIOR PRINCESS

• developer/publisher: titus • available: december

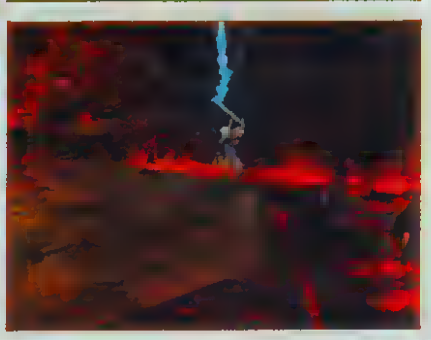
Here we are again back with Xena in tha preview section of the mag. Why you ask? Well, because for reasons unbeknownst to GR, Sony has passed tha title over to EA. We're not sure whether this has caused any delay but that's the case nevertheless.

Xena fans need not fear however, as you can see the game is looking very promising. Xena, Warrior Princess will feature elements from the actual show as well as the characters Gabrielle, Ares, and Hades, along with several new ones created for the game specifically such as Kalabrax, a powerful sorceress, and Amazon Bird Woman (hey, it's in tha press release, folks!) whom Xena must slay to free Gabrielle, who gets kidnapped during tha game's opening scene. The game covers seven enormous worlds with a total of 20 unique levels including secret areas and characters that will open up as the game progresses. Of course Lucy—er, I mean Xena—will need many moves to beat down har foes, including such vermin as dragons, cyclops, dyrad, golem and medusa, so they've loaded her up with quite tha quiver of moves like bicycle kicks, back flips, 360 splits and some enchanted weapons to boot. Universal Studios' Digital Arts is planning over 100 animations for her to maintain optimum realism for Xena's hardcore fans. Hay, Lucy Lawless and Renee O'Connor both had their faces texture mapped for their respective polygonal beauties (I wonder if that hurt?) so expect tha most out of tha first ever Xena game!









Gamers' Republic Reviews



Games Reviewed This Issue

Ape Escape	A-	B+	B+
Chocobo Racing	B	B	B-
Croc 2	B		
Echo Night	B	B-	B-
Jade Cocoon	B	B	B
Marvel Gold	A-	A-	A-
Metal Slug	A-	B+	A-
Need for Speed: High Stakes (PC)	B+		
Rising Zan	C+	C	C+
Tiny Tank	C-	C	C-
Tonic Trouble	A-		

Import Reviews

Ace Combat 3	B+		
Dynamite Deka 2	B		
Elemental Gimmick Gear	B		
Gungage	C		
Last Legion	C+		

1. Games marked in RED are highly recommended for your gaming collection.
2. Games marked in YELLOW should be avoided completely.

[Subject to the reviewer's personal preferences, it can be generally accepted that any game scoring a B or higher is a great way to spend your day. Games scoring a low D or F should be microwaved for three seconds and returned.]

Gamers' Republic Review System

A+ A A- B+ B B- C+ C C- D+ D D- F

[A+ to A] Games in this bracket are the best of the best. They feature top quality visual presentation, and are exceptional in their initial and long-term playability. The very best video game of its type, worthy of every gamer's undivided attention. *Example: Zelda*

[A- to B] Excellent, solid, and highly playable pieces of software. Although they lack the polish to become truly outstanding. Slight frame rate problems, a marginally disappointing ending or a number of small quirks may take an otherwise exalted release down a notch. *Example: Tonic Trouble*

[B- to C] Games in this bracket are generally very good, but may have one or more flaws. A game receiving a B- may be a great game that's just too short or has irritating music, while a C may have these same problems plus a couple more. Very good to average entertainment. *Example: Lode Runner 3D*

[C- to D] Games in this bracket require serious help in two or more areas. Perhaps the control responds horribly and the characters animate poorly. Although a game of this caliber may have had a great initial concept, it was never fully realized in the final stages of design. *Example: Sengoku Turb*

[D- to F] Very rarely will you come across a game of this lack of quality. A complete dearth of vision, a determination to remove any semblance of gameplay or fun, and particular attention made to use none of the most rudimentary of the system's proprietary tools. *Example: Superman*

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"About ten Metal Gear Solid-related books (guidebooks and more) have been published and sold in Japan. However, there is not a single one that matches the excellence of the guidebook by Millenium. Namely, the taste (artistic sense) oozing from all pages is superb. This is the kind of book we have been waiting for!

"Each paga is elaborately and finely laid out. The level of completion as a guidebook is extremely high. It even incorporates the essence and setting details of Alaska. Its composition as pure reading material is wondarful. And most important of all, it is visually very well polished and sophisticated, leaving us in the development team awe-stricken.

"As for screenshots, we can tell that the editors made sure they got what they really wanted to show. I could feel the daap love of the aditors for Metal Gear Solid. Even the forklift and gun cameras in tha game are given extensive explanations This is what a true guidebook should raally do – effectively supplement the game to follow up on details that could not be done in the game itself.

"Above all things, t am extremely touched that this "gama" called Matal Gear Solid, created by a group of Japanese people, is very sincerely dealt with as a piece of art.

"I would like to express my utmost gratitude to the staff who have put together this wonderful guidebook.

"Thank you vary much."

Hideo Kojima
Creator and Director of Metal Gear Solid

"[a] terrific... and rather thorough Metal Gear Solid strategy guide [with] clever reading and helpful data. This book bas it all."
–Gaming Age

"...by far the best strategy guide out there."
–metalgear.net

"An awesome game deserved an awesome guide... and it got it!"
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APE ESCAPE

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Video game journalists (good ones at least) are always harping about play mechanics. And rightfully so; they're one of many essential ingredients needed for any 3D action or adventure game to aspire from good to great. The last batch of games I played that got them right was RARE's Banjo-Kazooie (do they ever screw up?) and Sony Europe's seriously underrated Medievil. Tonic Trouble seems to have an abundance as well, but Sony's Ape Escape, well, it now defines the term "play mechanics." Through the use of "gadgets" the game constantly evolves, mixing platforming, puzzle elements, the first-ever capturing system (there's a whole lotta firsts in this game) and a plethora of gameplay elements. Ape Escape provides the player with a fresh perspective throughout the entire game—and what a game it is.





Ape Escape gives new meaning to the term 'play mechanics'...

Another Sony original that begs for a sequel on PS2...





Although the theme may seem somewhat nonsensical (capturing mind-controlled apes that have been sent back throughout time to play out their own diabolical version of *Planet of the Apes*), once you begin rounding up the slippery little chimps and interacting with the game's main characters, it seems almost brilliant in its execution. The first game to fully utilize Sony's Dual shock technology (you can't play it without one), Ape Escape boasts an evolving control scheme complete with training courses for each new gadget you obtain and constant guidance from your teammates at mission HQ. Of course, of vast importance are the levels themselves, and here, too, SCEI have achieved greatness. The frame rate is never an issue, nor is clipping (fade-in is skillfully administered), and the camera is a joy to behold. Everything works just as it should, and graphically the environments literally come alive with animated elements.

The ultra-deep gameplay does come with a price (the game is quite advanced), but it is well worth the time it takes to become acclimated to the game's somewhat complex mechanisms. Adopting an entirely new control scheme is never easy, even for expert players, but for beginners, Ape Escape will pose quite a challenge in this department, although training does prepare you well, and the game is pretty forgiving: little Jaru can take up to five hits, and power cookies almost always appear when you beat down an enemy. Like I always say, any great game should make you a better player for having played it, and Ape Escape certainly drives that point home. Here's how it works: the jump button is located on R1 or R2 and the four button cluster is used for coinciding gadgets, which you can assign any way you choose. L1 controls the camera, which you can always swing around directly behind Spike, and L2 is for aiming the sling shot and acts as the look button. The left stick moves Spike and the right stick performs a variety of functions, depending on the gadget you're using. For instance, when the blade is activated, spinning the stick causes Spike to fly. The sticks are also used as buttons for various tasks. Like I said, it takes awhile to get used to, but once you do, it's just brilliant to control.

The stars of the show, the monkeys themselves, range in intelligence. Some are easy to net, while others put up quite a fight, throwing bombs, shooting and running for their lives as only monkeys can. The professor will let you know which are feistiest, and will usually tell you the best way to approach them as the game progresses. I found that crouching and sneaking up on them almost always worked the best, although this didn't fool the really smart ones. Once they spot you they fire a cluster of homing missiles your way that are tough to dodge if you're too close. To give you an example of how polished the game is, when you go into said sneak mode, the music changes accordingly, dropping down to a whisper for your sneak attack. You can also shock the monkeys (yah, yah) in a number of ways and net them while they're stunned, but in close range they can get pretty nasty. A big part of what makes Ape Escape so darn fun is the many different ways you can execute,









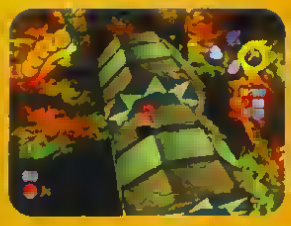
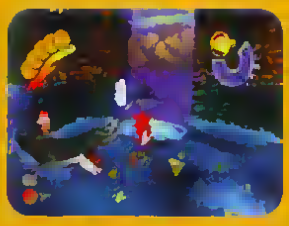


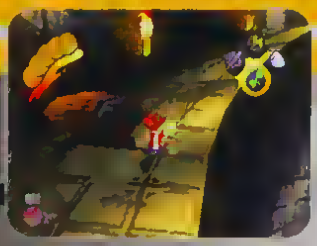
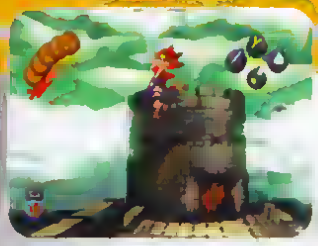
always having to factor in the environmental hazards before you pounce. This is easily one of the most well thought out games I've ever played.

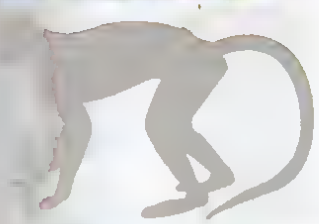
Ape Escape's soundtrack is as much a shock as the game itself. For a game of this type (hard-core action platforming with cool Japanese themes and characters), the music is among the best I've ever heard. Too often these types of games feature silly music; the techno and ambient mix in Ape Escape is unexpected and highly appreciated.

Aside from the main game there are mini-games as well, which you can access by collecting well-hidden pendants throughout the game. There's even a monkey data area where you can get info on the monkeys you've captured and see how many you missed in each level. Beat all three mini-games and get every monkey and, well, something good is bound to happen.

I love the way Ape Escape suddenly appeared on the scene. Just weeks after seeing the first shots, we had a reviewable game in our hands! How SCEI managed to keep a game of this magnitude under wraps for three years I don't know, but it's a practice I'd like to see adopted more often. Maybe not to this extent, but looking at screens a year or more out is a rather worthless endeavor in my opinion. Regardless, games like Ape Escape will keep the PlayStation alive as long as there are developers making games for it. I don't care how far technology reaches, nothing can take the place of a masterful platformer, and Ape Escape is surely that.

hear no evil







R.C. CAR

Reach inaccessible areas with a realistic controlling RC car!




Zoom in on the enemy from long range and take 'em down! Also great for stunning monkeys from a distance.

SLINGBACK SHOOTER

- VAST ENVIRONMENTS
- QUALITY TEXTURES
- NEVER EVER BORING
- HIGH REPLAYABILITY
- EXCELLENT SOUNDTRACK
- PLENTY OF SECRETS KEEP YOU REBOOTING FOR HOURS

REPUBLIC SAYS... It's hard to find fault with Ape Escape. It truly has it all: length, balance, play mechanics, sound effects, music and story. It's all good!

A.

CHOCOBO RACING

BY MIKE HOBBS

I found it a little odd initially seeing Square emulate another company's game so closely (especially when that company is Nintendo) but to be completely fair, there's obviously no better model. Cheapness and all, no one can deny the heightened emotional experience of a Mario Kart game, and while Chocobo Racing doesn't quite recapture the manic intensity of that game, it's still fun kart racer in its own right.

It's not like Square have aped MK outright, though. Chocobo Racing adds a story mode with, surprise surprise, a Yoshi's Story-style pop-up book, the completion of which awards you with points that can be used towards the creation of a custom racer that can be saved and used in the Grand Prix mode. The weapons system is versatile, and allows you to select one specific ability for your racer, to be used in conjunction with the power-ups littered throughout each course. These range from the super-cheap Mega Flare, which sends everyone spinning out of control, to speed boosts and item stealing. The power-up system is nice in that you can also increase the ability of your items by collecting more than one, as in Diddy Kong Racing.

The two-player mode is pretty good fun here, with just a bit of slow down on certain courses when the screen is filled. I have a feeling that Crash Team Racing will be better and more innovative.

















The story mode (above), with its Yoshi's Story-esque pop-up book aesthetic allows you to meet all of the different racers and even earn points with which to upgrade your vehicle. The two-player split screen (above right) is good fun and mostly smooth, though the intensity of Mario Kart is absent.

- GRAN TWO-PLAYER FUN
- ENTERTAINING IF PREMETABLE TRACK DESIGN
- CUSTOM RACERS ADD REPLAYABILITY
- SQUARE CAN'T DO CUTE LIKE NINTENDO

REPUBLIC SAYS... CHOCOBO RACING TRIES HARD TO BE THE PS' ANSWER TO MARIO KART, AND WHILE IT IS A GOOD DEAL OF FUN, SQUARE CAN'T MATCH NINTENDO IN THIS CATEGORY.

8

In 1913 the ship Orpheus mysteriously disappeared, 45 souls were lost...

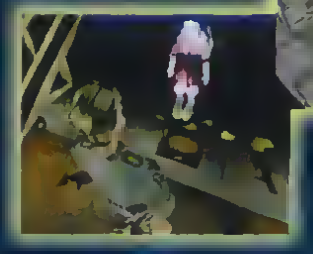
...or were they. Echo Night transports you to the Orpheus, the starting point of a spellbinding supernatural adventure that will take you to past times and distant places. As you explore the Orpheus, you'll encounter the ghosts of passengers who mysteriously died before their time. Now you must help them find peace. This will take courage and cunning, you will meet unusual people, discover lost objects, and talk with the dead. But take care, evil forces are at work, there are many devious mini-games and puzzles for you to survive before you can learn the secrets of the dead and the deadly talisman stones.

- From the developers of the King's Field series
- First person adventure with lots of puzzles to solve and mini-games to play
- Dual shock compatible
- More than 10 eerie locations to explore, including a ghost ship and an ancient castle
- Interact with over 50 characters
- Travel through time
- Over 58 objects to discover
- 3 different unique endings











Echo Night

PlayStation

TEEN T

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Is Argonaut's long awaited sequel 2 cute for its own good? Can a story fit for kids find happiness in a hardcore platforming package?

CROC 2

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Croc 2 has certainly had a precarious reception. From high praise to the lowest depths a platformer can sink I've seen unreasonably high and low reviews for this peculiar platforming hybrid. The game really throws you for a loop, as child-like themes make way to hard-core platforming stunts and unforgiving gameplay. In my opinion, Fox and Argonaut should have either gone straight for the kids all the way with this story and forgiving gameplay, or, entirely in the other direction, with a darker story, a more mature version of Croc (he hasn't grown since the last adventure) and this gameplay. But instead, the game goes "ga-ga-goo-goo" at you and then in Sybil-like fashion dumps you into a game of skills. A seasoned platform player, I welcome and respect a challenge. Being asked to chase down the Choo-Choo leaves me somewhat detached, but having at it reveals some excellent gameplay from the talented team at Argonaut. To really get into a platformer I usually need synchronicity—great characters, story, and gameplay. Croc has its share of devilish character designs on the Dante side, but the Gobbos are so cute I want to run them over with my car.

Now that I'm done bagging on the fruitiness of Croc 2, it's time to pay my respects. Croc 2 is improved in many ways over the first game, which, for its time, was pretty good. The engine this time out is even more impressive with nary a hint of Z-buffering woes or clipping (fade in is used very convincingly), and, the camera, though not perfect, is much more user friendly. Croc himself also controls better with a tighter turning radius, and more moves. The gameplay is comprised of many different elements, steadily increasing in difficulty as the game moves along. From puzzles, to races, and timing challenges, it's all here in terms of play mechanics. There are even





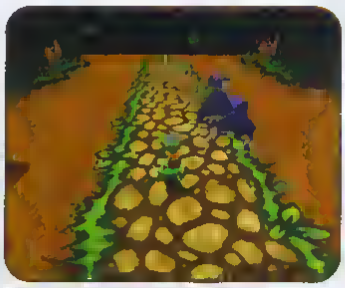


Croc 2's big on variety. From mining cart rides to hang gliding, boat racing, and more, the little gator gets around.















Dante has been resurrected, and now...
He wants a pair of alligator shoes!

mini-games like rafting and hang gliding in Croc 2, although I found these less than stellar in execution. The game also boasts a collection of impressive, albeit somewhat easy to defeat (for the most part) bosses. Visually, quality textures and bright vivid color abound with excellent attention to detail and many a clever design element. The game is also hooked up right in terms of structure, with vast villages to explore which spill into vast levels within, and lots to do in them, like shopping and helping the little fur turds with their problems.

So, here's the deal... If you liked the original and hoped for an improved variation, you should definitely give Croc 2 a whirl. If, on the other hand, you like your platformers either surreal, dark, or serious, you may want to think twice about trippin' with the Gobbos. One thing I can attest to is that Argonaut are highly skilled developers, because given Croc 2's hyper-cute guise, I found it necessary to see it through. And there you have it. ƒ

RGONAUT





published by: fox interactive

developed by: argonaut

DRX Hi-fi

- STELLAR ENGINE AND EXCELLENT TEXTURES
- VAST LEVELS THAT STRETCH IN EVERY DIRECTION
- LOTS TO DO | VERY CHALLENGING
- CUTER THAN A TELETUBBIES MARATHON

REPUBLIC SAYS... Croc 2's a very good platformer strewn with adventure and clever ideas. Too bad it's so freakin' cute. Overall, though, well worth playing.

B

COMPACT disc DIGITAL DATA

JADE COCOON

BY MIKE HOBBS

Breed and create hybrid monsters in Genki's powerful new PlayStation RPG. Stunning anime-style cinematics and excellent pre-rendered backgrounds

Opening with a beautifully done Studio Ghibli animation sequence, Jade Cocoon sets out to impress. Here, you are introduced to Levant, the latest in a line of Cocoon Masters, tasked with lifting a slumbering curse and bringing balance back to the land of Parel. With character design by Katsuya Kondo (*Kiki's Delivery Service*), you know you're not getting a run-of-the-mill RPG.

Instead, you're getting an interesting monster creation RPG. As you venture forth into four differently themed forests on your quest, you'll encounter many different monsters, or minions. The goal isn't necessarily to kill them, but to capture them in your cocoons, first by weakening them, and then by playing your ocarina. These captured minions can then be purified once you leave the forest and then merged together or spun into silk and sold. It's in the merging of the minions that Jade Cocoon hangs most of its gameplay. By combining the differing abilities of the minions, you create unique creatures, three of which can be taken with you into battle. Besides simply trying to create powerful minions, you're also trying to create a well-rounded set of creatures, balancing between the four different elemental properties of earth, wind, fire, and water. You do practically no fighting with Levant, instead using

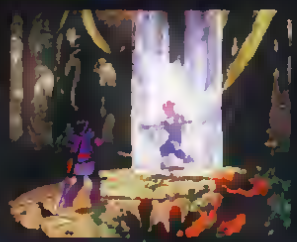
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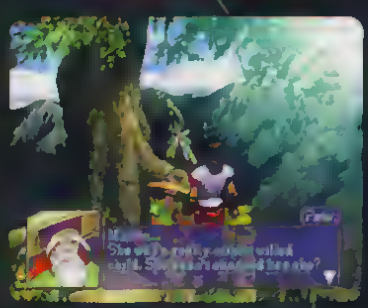




jade cocoon
the story of tamamayu

A6





A4

ORANG / FIGHT











COMPACT disc DIGITAL DATA

crave '99

Gather a force of creatures to wage war against the enemy.

Addictive RPG play mechanics and unique atmosphere

him only to capture enamy minions. And minions do not only have to be captured, as you can level up your own minions by vanquishing foes entirely. It's a good and addictive game system at work here. As you put your custom creatures up against bosses and other powerful monsters, you feel pride as your guys annihilate them, or if they're not up to snuff, a sense of determination to improve them.

Visually, though, Jada Cocoon isn't the sort of gama that bowls you over with its technical prowess. Rather, the graphics are attractive and functional. Tha nicely shaded and anveloped character models are tha best looking things in the game, but tha handsome pre-rendered backgrounds that you move around in could use a little more animation. Basically, nothing in the backdrops ever moves, save for the occasional pulsing glow. Also, don't expect big fireworks during battla, as standard issue lightning flashes and trensparent polygon eflects ara tha ordar of the day. Nothing in the game looks bad by any stratch; it's simply not pushing any boundaries, which is fine. The music is very strong, however, setting an appaalingly serene mood, sometimes mixing Indian percussion with ethareal voices.

As an experience, Jada Cocoon is not particularly long (I was abla to finish it in less than twenty hours), but for the style of gama, you wouldn't raally want it to be any longar. Just tha sama, tha two diffarent gameplay modes that supplemant the main gama are welcome. The first is a two-player versus mode, where you can battla othar playar's custom minions in an arena setting. The other mode, Eternal Corridor, can only be accessed once the game is beaten. Here, you traverse randomly laid out forests, encountering new items and minions not found in tha main game.

I had a good time with Jada Cocoon. It was enjoyable in long stretches, and tha desire to create a powerful team of minions was always goading me on. It's not a game one plays to marvel at (except for the animatad intro), but rather it's a game to sit back with and enjoy. ✲

- GREAT ART AND CHARACTER DESIGN
- ENGROSSING MONSTER CREATION
- WELL CONCEIVED IF CLICHÉD STORY
- WONDERFUL, MELLOW SOUNDTRACK

REPUBLIC SAYS... GENKI'S JADE COCOON WASN'T WHAT I WAS EXPECTING, BUT I ENJOYED IT NONETHELESS. DEVELOPING MY OWN CUSTOM GROUP OF MONSTERS PROVED HIGHLY ENTERTAINING

B



When I first learned that Nintendo would be doing a Mario-themed golf game for the N64, I made a bold and off-the-wall prediction that it would be brilliant and delightful. And lo and behold, what has Nintendo delivered unto us but a brilliant and delightful game of golf, Mario style. A collaboration between Nintendo and Camelot Software Planning (the makers of the fantastic Hot Shots Golf for PlayStation), Mario Golf 64 is everything I had hoped it would be: fun, challenging, humorous, and filled to the brim with classic Nintendo touches. The version you're looking at here is a 100-percent Japanese edition (we couldn't secure a translated one before press), but rest assured that apart from the text, this is the game that will be on store shelves this July.

Perhaps the best thing about Mario Golf 64 is the sheer amount of extra features Nintendo and Camelot have given you to do besides play a simple round of golf against your friends, silicon or otherwise. There's the fiendishly fun Ring Shot mode, where you not only have to make holes, but also get the ball to go through



MARIO GOLF 64

BY MIKE HOBBS

Mama mia! Nintendo and Camelot Software Planning join forces.

Mario takes to the green in this hugely enjoyable game of golf





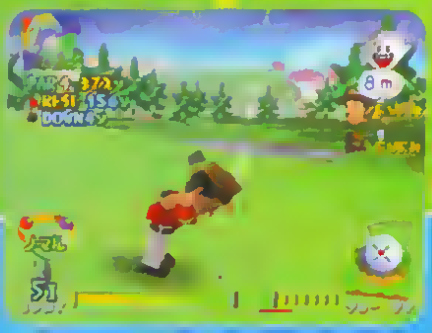




This is just a taste of some of the extra modes of Mario Golf 64. In the upper left, we see Club Slot, where players are limited to the clubs won on the slot machine. The upper right shows one of the putter courses, and the left shot demonstrates the challenging Ring Shot mode, where you must get the ball through rotating hoops.









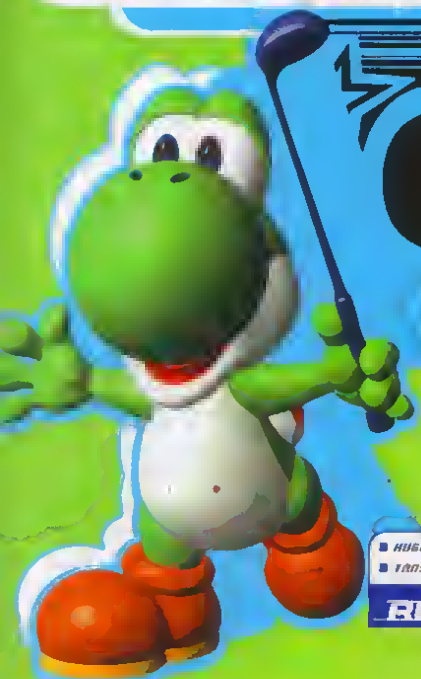


giant rotating rings. This is not as easy as it might sound, as you really have to get the ball to go through some amazing motions to get it through the hoops. Then there's the Putter Golf mode, consisting of small, enclosed putting greens in the shape of letters and numbers. A one-player-only mode called Character Get allows you to open up the game's multiple hidden characters by playing against each of them in turn, a victory earning you that particular character. A multi-player game called Club Slot limits your clubs to those that are won by having a pull at a slot machine. Imagine playing a par five and your biggest club is a pitching wedge, or being stuck with a three wood on a par three. Other multiplayer modes include stroke play, skins game, and match play. Rounding out the one-player games are speed golf and tournament, where you can earn coins to open up more courses.

What this laundry list of gameplay features adds up to is a wonderfully fun and cute game of golf, with variety and infectious cheerfulness coming out of its ears. The classic Nintendo characters are very appealing in this setting, especially when you discover that each of them has eight different little voice samples that can be activated by the d-pad and C-buttons. Everything from Mario saying "mama mia" to Yoshi's high-pitched zippy blurts can be activated ad nauseam. But Nintendo are clever, and they've designed it so that you can't use the voices while the other player is using the power meter and actually taking a shot. The voices are good fun, the first of many great Nintendo touches sprinkled throughout the game. There's the Super Mario Bros. dungeon music that plays as you're taking a putt and even different effects on perfectly hit balls. If Yoshi hits a full power shot, the ball will leave a rainbow trail, or for Mario, the ball will be engulfed in flames. And, of course, you'll find plenty of Nintendo scenery throughout the game's numerous and fantastically 3D course that, like Hot Shots Golf, can be viewed in their entirety.

I can't recommend Mario Golf 64 more highly. It's as easy to pick up and play as any Nintendo game, yet gives you so much to discover and so many challenges that it is by no means easy. And it naturally follows that the game is an unqualified blast with four players.

It's a wonderfull *





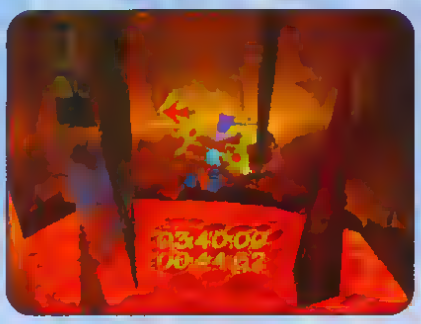
The real-time courses of Mario Golf 64

As in Camelot's previous game, the delectable Hot Shots Golf, Mario Golf 64 allows you to view the entire course in real time. And thanks to the extra 3D processing power of the N64, all of the courses in Mario Golf 64 have a great deal of polygonal detail and soft-looking surfaces. They almost look like pre-renders.

- HUGE ADD-TO FOUR-PLAYER FUN
- TONS OF FEATURES
- VERY APPEALING USE OF CHARACTERS
- CATCHY AND LAID BACK TUNES

REPUBLIC SAYS... NINTENDO AND CAMELOT HAVE MADE PROBABLY ONE OF THE MOST ENTERTAINING CONSOLE GOLF GAMES OF ALL TIME. THAT IS, IF YOU LIKE YOUR GOLF SUGAR SWEET.

A-



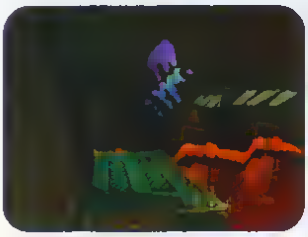





TONIC TROUBLE

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Ed made a really big mess... And helping him clean it up is going to be illegally fun!

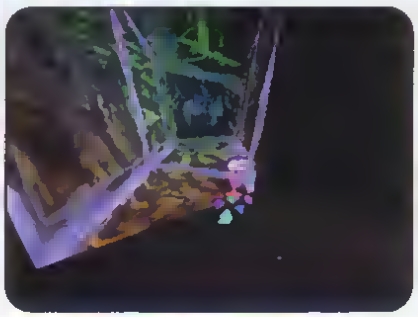
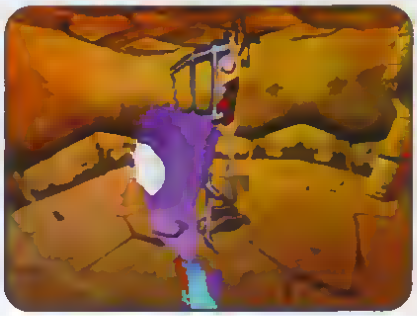


What I hoped would be a memorable experience has turned out to be that and more as one of gaming's coolest new stars prepares to take his place among the platforming elite. The star of Tonic Trouble, Ed, has charm to burn and a personality all his own, not to mention a head shaped like a pencil eraser. The game he stars in blends platforming, riddle solving, exploration, flying, a touch of dashing through the snow, and a plethora of play mechanics into one big ball of pure (if not a little surreal), fun.

It all starts when Ed, a lowly janitor on a space frigate, is cleaning up around the ship. Ed happens upon a feisty pile of space sludge and has a heck of a time chasing it down. Once it's all cleaned up Ed reaches for a curious-looking can of juice to quench his thirst and unknowingly releases a dangerous elixir. The powerful living ooze pops a few rivets in the ship's hull and falls to Earth, turning the landscape into a living sea of killer vegetables and psychedelic rivers. The lone human in the area, a grunt by the name of Grogh,



Super Ed (above) takes care of the tough stuff the little guy can't handle. Whenever Ed stumbles on his favorite snack, popcorn, Super Ed takes over for a limited time.

Platforming, puzzle solving, exploration, flight, adventure and a plethora of play mechanics come together for an unforgettable clean-up job of galactic proportions!

witnesses the toxic goo's effects and opportunistically chugs it down, transforming himself into the mad ruler of this bent world. Ed, having changed the evolution of an entire planet (oops) is ordered to clean up the mess tout de suite. In order to do so, Ed must recruit the help of a nutty scientist and his shapely daughter, Suzi. So, the first thing he must do when he arrives on Earth is free the Doc. From there the game is comprised of collecting parts for a machine the Doc is building to launch Ed into Grogh's domain. Each time Ed completes a task he is awarded a new device such as the ability to fly, a blow gun, a pogo stick, etc. Each of these elements is then put to use in the game's eight-plus main chambers, which are privy to some of the coolest situations you're likely to ever encounter. Flawlessly designed and detailed, each is like a game unto itself with matching inhabitants to boot. The fun doesn't end there, either. Not unlike a Miyamoto or RARE game, revisiting stages leads to added content. Ed must collect 160 antidotes to develop an immunity to Grogh's poison, and there are other items to collect that can only be reached once certain elements are received. So going back into an area for the second time always opens up new passageways and possibilities. Just as paramount in Tonic's case—and more so than in just about any other character driven game I've played—is Ed's manner and the way the music brings it to light. This game literally creates its own mood. The universe and characters and the way Ed approaches them mingles perfectly with the enchanting soundtrack in a way that's hard to describe. It certainly brought a smile to



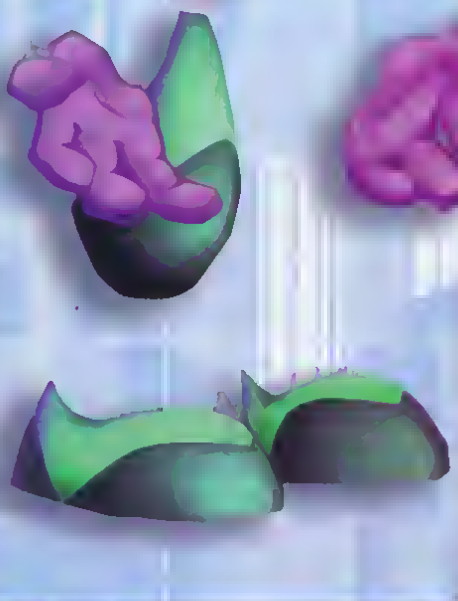
















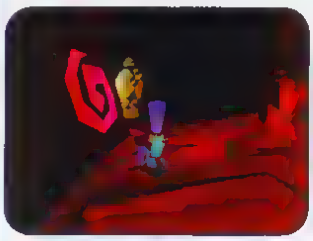
Once Ed earns the ability, he can transform himself into any creature he can find a transporter for. Above, as an old bag of a Mummy he sneaks into the Pyramid, as a killer tomato he can reach an important secret, as Lord Grohl he gets by security, and as a big dino he uncovers secrets hidden under the ice.

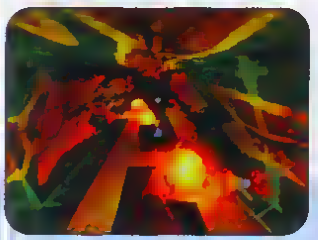


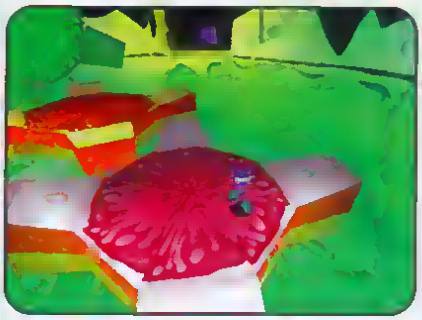
Ed deserves a spin on the Dreamcast. After all, Rayman's getting one

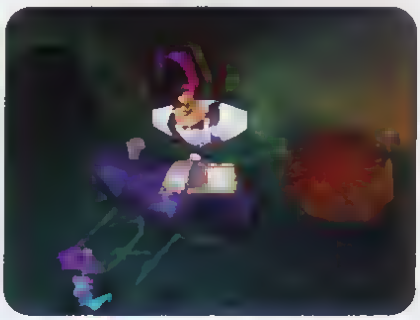
my face. Controlling Ed and his arsenal is a snap, especially after Agent Espion trains you for each new item. Espion, a pair of bug eyes staring through a hole in a newspaper, is to Ed what Q is to Bond. Ed's other contact is Suzi. She's waiting for Ed at the end of every level and keeps him abreast (or two) of the situation. Those of you who read my early reports on Tonic may remember the comments regarding UbiSoft's new engine, used for this and Rayman 2. Well, they weren't kidding when they said it was revolutionary. Not only is the camera highly intelligent, complete with three modes to choose from, but there is no fog among vast stretches of landscape. Within the Pyramids, for instance, one area in particular, where Ed goes up against a Big Moggy, is massive and you can see all the way across it with great clarity. Then there's the vastness of the Pressure Cooker. Huge rooms stretch far and wide without a hint of fog. Quite refreshing given the hazy days of the 64 gone by.

So, to wrap up: Fun, uplifting, visually stunning, deep, and aurally delectable, you would have to be nuts not to ad a little Tonic Trouble to your fall gaming agenda. Oh, and if you happen to own an accelerated PC, well, wait till you see that version next month. Oh my.









- INCREDIBLE LEVEL DESIGN AND STRUCTURE
- OUT OF THIS WORLD CAST OF CHARACTERS
- LARGER WITH UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS AND PLAY MECHANICS
- ENCHANTING SOUNDTRACK TIES IT ALL TOGETHER WONDERFULLY

REPUBLIC SAYS... Just as I predicted, Tonic Trouble is a masterful platformer riddled with personality and many hours of ingenious gameplay. I can't wait to play the PC version next month!

A-

31441 07950

NEED FOR SPEED HIGH STAKES

BY MIKE HOBBS

Many are no doubt enjoying this latest Need For Speed on their PlayStations, but for those gamers with the means, this PC version represents the true High Stakes experience. This fourth entry in EA's popular series has a lot going for it, with the high resolution accelerated graphics being but the on ramp into this fun and highly playable racing/pursuit game.

As in previous NFS games, there is a wealth of gameplay modes here, the most notable addition being the Career mode. Here, you earn money and prizes as you race through several different circuits, using the winnings to purchase upgrades, new vehicles, or to repair your current ride, which now shows polygonal body damage. This Career mode incorporates two of the other available styles of race including Tournament and Knockout, where each backmarker is eliminated over the course of eight races, leaving you to go one on one with the last surviving driver.

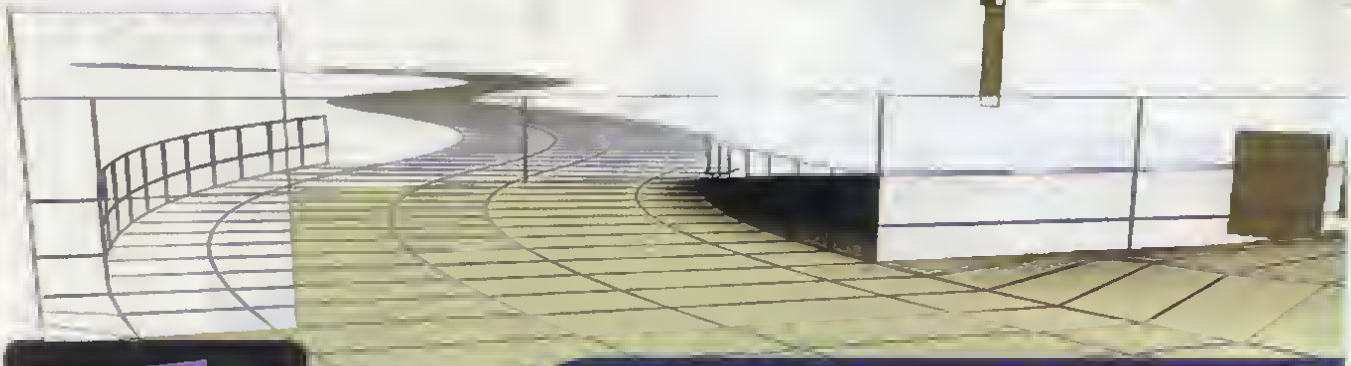
Making a welcome return is the addictive Hot Pursuit mode. Play as a pursuing cop or fleeing racer in the Classic version of Hot Pursuit, while two new modes offer up even more challenges. In Getaway, you must stay out on the track for as long as possible as cops set up roadblocks and spike strips. Conversely, it's your job as a cop in this mode to take the racer down as quickly as possible. In Time Trap, you must complete a set number of laps within a fixed time, each ticket putting you further and further off the pace. And as a cop in this mode, you've got to stop both racers frequently enough so as to allow their time limit to expire.

When it comes to the courses and the cars, NFS:HS is strong. Nineteen diverse autos can be accessed, from McLaren F1s to BMW M5s, with more cars available for download via the NFS website. The control isn't astronomically sophisticated, but it is good, and each vehicle handles uniquely and predictably, making the game easy to pick up and play. The cars themselves generally look good and feature fully modeled interiors, though they are just a little roughly textured for my tastes. The courses, however, are a different story, as they are unquestionably gorgeous. With two Voodoo 2s or a Voodoo 3, the draw distance is massive, even at the highest resolution, and trackside detail is high and well textured. The 15-plus courses are very well laid out with great atmospheric hazing and lighting effects producing a wonderful overall appearance.

The draw of NFS is that the solid racing portion of the game is enhanced by the inclusion of the exciting Hot Pursuit modes. Neither could quite stand on its own as an entire game, but taken together as a package, they produce a broadly satisfying experience. *



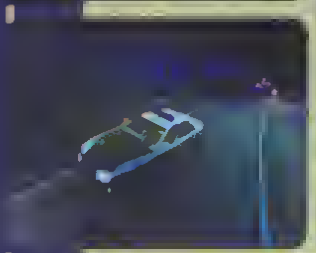












SPEED NEED FOR SPEED NEED FOR SPEED

- INCREDIBLE LOOKING COURSES
- PLENTY OF FUN GAMEPLAY MODES
- GOOD MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT
- SOUND EFFECTS NOTHING SPECIAL

REPUBLIC SAYS... The fourth Need For Speed has enough new modes, cars, and courses to be worth any fan's time. It also looks fantastic and plays well.

B+

created by: electronic arts









UM JAMMER LAMMY



BY BRADY FIECHTER

Sony describes Um Jammer Lammy, the sequel to the oddly infectious musical-timing game Parappa the Rapper, as "fun-filled and upbeat." Indeed it is. But perhaps a better description of the game would be grotesquely bizarre.

Case in point: (a) Like in Parappa the Rapper, the object of the game is for Lammy, the new female lead, to match the beat and rhythm of a character's song by timing button combinations. Most of these songs are supported by such lyrics as "Did I eat my drink? I thought milk was pink"; "I need to potty, or yes I'll be naughty"; and "I'm still wondering when I die, I hope I'll get to eat, I hope I'll cry." (b) The game's story is presented in colorful, hallucinatory CG sequences that depict, for example, Lammy crashing in a jet as it takes out a crowd of cars and ignites into ball of flames; a caterpillar-like creature in a maternity ward that has a nasty habit of vomiting in obscenely large quantities; Lammy slipping on a banana peel, dying, leaving her body and going to hell; and a troop of marching tough-guy business men proclaiming that their pregnant partners can "pay the bills and do the dishes." (c) After completing the seven stages in Lammy's story, Parappa becomes available to go through the same levels, but with remixed hip-hop-tinged songs against which to wage his lyrical sparring. It is Parappa's story that takes the game over the edge of insanity, as exhibited in a typical exchange of dialogue: Boy: "This is called the yummy-yummy beef stage. Do you like?" Girl: "I think it needs to be a little more girl-like." Boy: "Like life-sized beef?"





Some individuals might find offense and aversion to Um Jammer Lammy's eccentric, uninhibited humor, but there is some rather witty, sarcastic, subtle humor lying below the more twisted exterior that is refreshing; I love the game's harsh slap in the face of political correctness.

With a lot to like, Um Jammer Lammy bests its predecessor in a number of ways: it is edgier, more challenging, much more outrageous, has a heavier but just as enjoyable rock sound, and is packed with extras like 2-player competition. The only major aspect missing is the crisp newness of that first encounter with the original Parappa the Rapper.



- INFECTIOUS GUITAR-HEAVY TUNES
- ECCENTRIC ABSTRACT HUMOR IS A GEM
- VISUAL STYLE TRULY UNIQUE
- THE NOVELTY OF THE FIRST GAME IS MISSING

REPUBLIC SAYS... A COMBINATION OF BIZARRE, DECEPTIVELY SMART HUMOUR, ECCENTRIC VISUAL STYLE AND MUSICAL GAMEPLAY PLACES UM JAMMER LAMMY IN A LEAGUE OF ITS OWN

B

RISING ZAN

• developer **uep systems** • publisher **agetec** • available **now**



C+

If you think playing the role of a Super Hero is cool, imagine taking the role of a Super Ultra Sexy hero. I bet you are shaking with excitement, aren't you? What happened is a cowboy of the old west was not able to eradicate the evil going on in his town with just a pistol in hand. While investigating a local ravine he was ambushed by a swarm of ninjas, not uncommon in the pioneer days of early America. Conveniently, a Samurai master named Suzuki, who also happened to be a dear friend of his late father, saved him.

His lifelong dream has been to be a hero, so he asked Suzuki to teach him the way of the Samurai. Years have now passed and Johnny, the cowboy in this story, has returned to his hometown ready to face his attackers. He now has the skills of both a sharpshooter and a profound Samurai warrior. Pretty neat.



If this sounds corny, you are correct. It reeks of a '70s B movie, and the story and writing is so bad that you actually start to appreciate it. Cut scenes string together the levels, and campy dialog is used in hopes of a cheap laugh.

The game itself falls under the hack 'n' slash premise. Johnny, who has now changed his name to Zan, uses a lot of different attacks with both his Katana and six-shooter. Using the gun requires players to lock-on to an enemy. The sword has a much more diverse range of attacks. Each enemy has a different weakness, and Zan needs to utilize handy defensive moves until he gets his chance for attack. There are many techniques players are going to need to ripen, thankfully, the game possesses a training mode to adequately prepare you for the action in store.



The collision detection is questionable, and some of the poly shearing is unacceptable for the game's moderate pace, but each level has a unique look and objective to keep players from getting bored. At the end of each impact, the player is rated on weapon performance, and given a "Sexy" rating that will help Zan reach his goal of being a hero.

Rising Zan offers a good time without frustration. It is easy to play, but in the end, becomes routine.







TINY TANK

• developer **appaloosa** • publisher **sces** • available: **now**



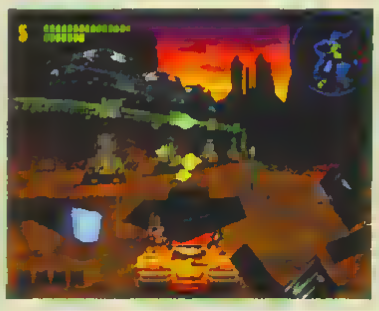
C-

Back in the January issue, Gamers' Republic reviewed Tiny Tank, criticizing it mostly for a horrible frame rate that severely undermined the game's more redeemable qualities. Now this innocuous game is getting a second chance for favorable review, and according to Sony, the frame rate has been attended to and other minor improvements have been made. The fact of the matter is, none of the changes affects the game in any overtly positive fashion, and the frame rate has only gone from really bad to bad.

Having had the chance to play the game yet again, I've now come to the conclusion that Tiny Tank is even more average than it first opined. A few of the search-and-destroy missions are somewhat enjoyable and are creatively conceived, but too much of the time the dull level designs pinch the gameplay down to extremely laborious, perfunctory tasks that ultimately come down to shooting AI-challenged tanks and robots and moving on. After a kill, gun turrets and electronic brains are left behind, and Tiny, the tank you command, can be outfitted for multiple points of weapons fire.

In an attempt to fully bring the backstory into the game, Appaloosa has used a novel idea of broadcasting a radio show through Tiny, and some of the dialogue—particularly in cut scenes—is actually quite clever. But with this approach comes a miscalculated use of Top 40-style music, and in keeping with a sardonic tone, Tiny is given a limited stock of vacuous observations. But no harm done: Your first response will probably be to head to the options screen in search of the volume control. My first response was to note that a yellow tank spouting lines like "He's fallen and he can't get up" is a good indication of the ultimate quality of the game I was playing.









COUNTER+POINT

Ape Escape • SCEI • Sony

PlayStation

Originally Reviewed By Dave Halverson (page 51)

It's hard to find fault with Ape Escape. It truly has it all: length, balance, play mechanics, sound effects, music and story. It's all good!

A-

- More gameplay than you can shake a Dual Shock stick at
- Plenty of great-looking levels with loads to do in each one



- Inventive play mechanics and unprecedented use of analog control
- Graphics not up to par with the gameplay, but a pleasing look, great music

Mike Hobbs: B+

There's so much gameplay in Ape Escape that it makes games like Spyro or even Crash seem almost basic and uninteresting. Making full use of the Dual Shock controller (the game doesn't work without one), you'll be amazed at the sheer number of different abilities you'll have control over. Everything from paddling a raft to controlling an RC car is handled gratifully. I particularly liked the Zelda-esque way of assigning items to specific buttons. Graphically, Ape Escape is quite good, with some impressive-looking level design and bright, cheerful colors, though the lead character could use a more interesting look and personality. Action/platform fans owe it to themselves to check this game out immediately.

Grady Fiechter: B+

What a great game this is. In the same league as Crash Bandicoot and Spyro the Dragon, Ape Escape is an uncommonly creative take on a genre that is grossly unsupported on PlayStation. As strong on innovation at it is classic inspiration, Ape Esrape's biggest draw is the ambitious use of analog control, which takes play mechanics into new territory. I love the core tank of snaking up on monkeys and capturing them in a net, and the many gadgets you control to achieve your goal only strengthens this game's rock solid gameplay foundation.

Chocobo Racing • Square • Electronic Arts

PlayStation

Originally Reviewed By Mike Hobbs (page 64)

Chocobo Racing tries hard to be the PS' answer to Mario Kart, and while it is a good deal of fun, Square can't match Nintendo in this category.

B

- Excellent universe, Precise controls
- Great engine, Excellent Music



- A number of elements smack of Mario Kart – no invention, but still fun
- A late-generation PS game should look so much better

Dave Halverson: B

Square's first foray into the crated video game kart wars displate a robust 3D engine, han good depth, and most importantly, is definitively Square. Besides featuring characters from their vast universe, FF battle hymns chime in the background at the end of each race...too cool. Control-wise, a vast array of possibilities exist, depending on which kart you choose, leading to a distinctly different feel out on the track. Not all of these karts rate wheels. Personally I found Golem to be the man. The environments are tops for a PS base, the diorama story mode is excellent and the feel is crisp and responsive. I like it a lot.

Grady Fiechter: B-

Despite its undeniable missteps, no racing game—and yes, that includes Wipeout and Ridge Racer—has been able to entertain me on the same level as Mario Kart 64. That Chocobo Racing owes its very lifeblood to the Mario Kart school of kart design is no doubt why I enjoyed the game more than I should have; it's not that pleasing to look at, its sprite-based racers just aren't very exciting, and the power-ups are derivative. But the two-player mode is a perennial source for good fun, the music is catchy, and the blithe atmosphere is enough to keep the game alive.

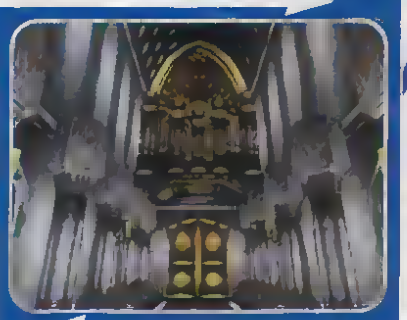
Echo Night • From Software • ASCII

PlayStation

Despite a weak engine, Echo Night manages to create the ambience a game like this needs. Quality sound effects, a good story, and entertaining puzzles are just enough to please fans of the genre.

B-

- Interesting story and entertaining puzzle underpin this niche title
- 3D environments need major polish; music is rather pointless



- Great atmosphere and sound design create a very compelling mood
- A little stiff and clubbed with less-than-cutting-edge graphics

Grady Fiechter: B+

Darkly themed puzzle games like Mansion of Hidden Souls and D are esoteric pleasures. Personally, I love turning out the lights, giving into the mysterious, morose atmosphere and enjoying the stock-hornon scares and atypical point-and-click gameplay. So it is no mystery why I enjoyed Echo Night, a gloomy game that is weak in technical achievements but strong in story and puzzle-based gameplay. The setting of an antiquated ocean liner is richly appealing, and the task of freeing tormented souls that make the grand ship their graveyard is intriguing. Echo Night is a huge distance from great game making, but I'm glad I played it.

Mike Hobbs: B-

Buoyed by a rich atmosphere and soundtrack, From Software's Echo Night succeeds at creating a compelling game environment in spite of a fairly rough-looking engine and stiff control. The time travelling storyline keeps things interesting, visually and conceptually, and though the game's pace is slow, you're not likely to get bored. But it's the sound design in Echo Night that really stands out, an high-quality sound effects and creepy background noises conspire to create an aural tapestry of the highest quality. Echo Night is not for everyone, but those with a penchant for slow adventure games and a tolerance for less than cutting edge graphics should be able to get into this one.

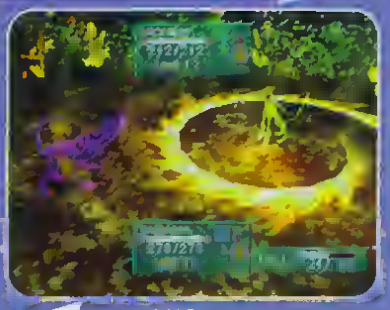
Jade Cocoon • Genki • Crave

Originally Reviewed By Mike Hobbs (page 58)

Genki's Jade Cocoon wasn't what I was expecting, but I enjoyed it nonetheless. Developing a custom group of monsters proved entertaining and addictive.

B

- The game's mystical, surreal tone is absorbing.
- Lovely music and enchanting cutscenes fuel the gentle ambience.



- There's something very calming about this game, and it begs to remain hidden. Good.
- Strong atmosphere and mystical themes are cool, but a little more drama is ever cooler

Brady Fiechter: B

I must admit: initially, I was a bit disappointed with Jade Cocoon, expecting more of a true RPG than a monster-creation game. But the more I played the game, the more I came to appreciate the unique depths of the combat system, and the rich atmosphere alone was enough to make up for the lack of towns and character interaction. For those of you who appreciate cinemas in games as much as I do, the beautiful artistry of Studio Ghibli will undoubtedly prove a large draw in the game. From the character design and ethereal environments to the gentle music, the game is a richly atmospheric experience. I'd love to see these designers on a pure RPG project.

Mike Griffin: B

Jade Cocoon isn't really what anyone expects it to be, that being an RPG in the vein of FF or Suikoden. As the title indicates, you can wrap up your enemies as your own, morphing and growing them into greater beasts during captivity. That play-mechanic alone is what separates Jade Cocoon from any RPG available on the PS today. I was less than impressed by the quality of many of the pre-rendered backgrounds, but the various cut-scenes are well animated and expressive is consistently conveyed without failure. I'm a huge fan of the art style, however, including the environments, characters, and ancient weapons and items. Worth buying.

Mario Golf • Camelot • Nintendo

Originally Reviewed By Mike Hobbs (page 66)

Nintendo and Camelot have made probably one of the most entertaining console golf games of all time. That is, if you like your golf sugar sweet.

A-

- Nintendo characters collide in a Nintendo universe
- For all its whimsical qualities, still true to the game of golf



- Easy to grasp, tough to master; Great characters
- Novel play mechanics, Excellent gameplay

Brady Fiechter: A-

It seems that nearly everywhere the Ninyendo characters lend their priceless personalities, a wonderful game comes together. One of the first golf games I've played, Mario Golf is classic Nintendo charm in every single area, yet true to the sport of golf. The little touches like chatter from your opponent ase nice embellishments to the solid, intuitive gameplay. The treasure chest of Nintendo sound effects, the cheerful music and colorful, winning graphics, the gaming greats like Mario and Yoshi — these qualities alone guarantee a look. But merged with the exceptional foundation of intuitive, fast-paced, faithful gameplay, Mario Golf becomes another Nintendo must-have.

Dave Halverson: B+

I love a good golf game. The problem is that developers seem to always find a way to make them suck. Three things a quality golf game must have are a formidable engine (none of that slide show crap), good putting, and interesting characters. A little music never hurt either. Sega's Arnold Palmer, Seta's Hole in One, and SNK's Top Player Golf all had the skills. Now, we can all add one more to the list. Nintendo has put the fun back in golfing games and produced what may be the best one to date. Personality, depth, extras, graphics and music, it's all very, very, good.

Metal Slug: First Mission • SNK • SNK

Originally Reviewed By Frank Martinez Jr. (page 76)

MS.FM stays true to the level of quality this franchise has set and goes ever further by providing added depth for major portable replayability. It exemplifies SNK's mutual respect for the games they make and the people who play them

A-

- It scrolls all over, and there's parallax too. The detail is high, and it animates so well.
- This game is deeper than a Metal Slug needs to be, but you need to play this Metal Slug.



- Parallax! Yeeaah! Captures the feel of its big brother
- Responsive controls, Excellent save feature

Mike Griffin: B+

How cool is this? Metal Slug, the sprite-crunching legend, fully represented on baby brother Pocket! Seriously, Metal Slug: First Mission is a total shocker and an absolute joy to play. The NGP's clicky pad feels TOO good to be true as you maneuver hyper-animated sprites through big, lush, parallax scrolling levels and insane amounts of mini 16-bit detail. But wait, what's this? MS:FM offers me even more depth than the big boys? I guess so, since I'm playing it again and again, finding new routes and secrets, saving my game as I progress. Here, what a shocker this one turned out to be! If you're a fan of the full size MS games, for the theme, the style, or the action, then play this game!

Dave Halverson: A-

Metal Slug: First Mission may well be the best hand-held game I have ever played (Nomad games not included). First of all, there's parallax, something I have been waiting for on handhelds to produce. But most importantly, SNK have somehow captured the spirit of the coin-op right down to the jingly scaled down music. Through slick animation, diverse missions with multiple paths, and most surprisingly, big burly mecha bosses, the Pocket version is like a little brother to the legendary 2D series. They even introduce a few female warriors. A few more like this and my Gameboy's gonna get a long vacation.

COUNTER + POINT

Rising Zan • UEP Systems • AgeTec

PlayStation

Originally Reviewed By Tom Stratton (page 67)

Rising Zan offers a good time without frustration. It is easy to play, but in the end, becomes routine.

C+

- Cool theme and characters; Well thought-out gameplay
- Graphics slightly on the chunky side; High learning curve

Dave Halverson: C+

When was the last time you controlled a character wearing a cowboy hat? Sunset Riders? Dashin' Desperados? Lucky Luke? My point? The wild, wild west doesn't seem to bring gamers out of the woodwork. Rising Zan, takes the premise to the extreme though, as our vengeful hero is battling a pack of evil Ninjas responsible for his father's early demise. To do so he must master the way of the Samurai which leads to big-time platy mechanics. The game may actually be too complex for some, so UEP Systems (Cool Boarders) have installed a comprehensive training regimen to get you started. The game has its share of graphical hiccups but overall its originality, theme, and diversity save the day.



- Broken, tearing, and severely dusted engine provides spills and zero thrills.
- Cool theme and entertaining story, and plenty of play mechanics...doesn't always work though

Mike Griffin: C+

This game is so rough around the edges, and yet it somehow carries a strange appeal that may keep you playing. For starters, Zan has just about every move you could ask for in a 3D action/adventure. Too bad the execution is so sloppy, otherwise the hopeful play-mechanics would be a total saving grace. Next, I find myself addicted to the bizarre Ninjas & Cowboys theme. Of course I can sit through cable B-movies too, just to appreciate the admiration, and I think that's the effect that Rising Zan has on me. Despite these two bright areas, it's really hard to get into the game when the engine is so pitiful and the enemies are so repetitious. RZ is better than average, and I'm kind.

Tiny Tank • Appaloosa • SCEA

PlayStation

Originally Reviewed By Brady Fiechter (page 67)

There's a moral to the Tiny Tank story: when you fix a game FIX IT!

C-

- Good concept; Some shining moments
- Poor execution; Frame rate problems

Dave Halverson: C

There's no arguing that Tiny Tank, with its alternate universe and cool "in-the-moment" buise, has a good premise. It had to have been these attributes that prompted Sony to try and rescue it from its fatal flaws, marked drops in the frame rate, and run-of-the-mill gameplay. They were able to work out enough of the kinks to make it playable all the way through just to see where it would lead, but in the end, a turd's a turd no matter what color it is. The living tank premise I like; the unrealized gameplay and objectives, however, left me wanting more.



- Severely compromised frame rate ruins any chance of the pure shooting fun that was intended
- The hit-and-miss humor is mostly miss

Mike Hobbs: C-

Tiny Tank's months-long delay was supposed to tame some of the more blaming frame rate problems, so I'm disappointed that this game's engine still can't handle the action that's been designed into the game. When the screen is filled, Tiny Tank falters and turns into a stuttering mess. And it's too bad because this could have been a fun little 3D shooter. Novel concepts, such as the constant radio broadcast, are unfortunately hit and miss, with some music choices that simply do not work at all. You can enjoy the game somewhat, but the fun is always tempered by frustration at the lack of smoothness. Maybe worth a rental. Maybe.

Um Jammer Lammy • Nana-on-sha • SCEA

PlayStation

Originally Reviewed By Brady Fiechter (page 66)

A combination of bizarre, deceptively smart humor, eccentric visual style and musical gameplay places Um Jammer Lammy in a league of its own.

B

- As required a purchase as Parappa, Uji is the dark sequel that the series needed.
- Ok, so it's not that dark. Lammy's a cutie, the music is fruity and cool, and luscious colors abound!!!

Mike Griffin: B

Blame it all on Robust A. Greenblat! This crazed (and probably brilliant) American has once again mercilessly convinced poor, defenseless Japanese developers to create a whacked-out music game. If you only judge Uji as a sequel to Parappa, then sure, it's not the charming snocrem we all remember that first time around. Too bad I think that Um Jammer Lammy packs more charm than Parappa, thanks to raw, mature humor, but mostly non-sensical humor that WILL freak you out. Some of the lyrics in this game...oh man they're so weird. Besides my total appreciation of the theme and general sin on display, I love the fact that there's a bonus Parappa mode with awesome hip-hop remixes.



- Easily the most bizarre game you'll play this year on PlayStation
- Some of the charm and more appealing aspects of Parappa are missing

Mike Hobbs: B

Obviously, the freshness of the first Parappa cannot be matched by a sequel, so Sony gave taken the "more is more" approach and just thrown in so much utterly twisted humor and scenarios that it almost succeeds as much as the first game. Being able to do through nearly the entire game as Parappa once Lammy's game is completed is a nice bonus, as is the wealth of two player action present. Yes, the music's not quite as catchy and endearing, and the innocence of Parappa has been replaced by incredibly bizarre and often frightening lyrics, but it is without a doubt worth checking out. The Japanese don't get much weirder than this.

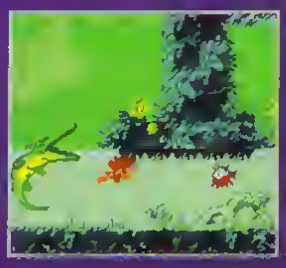
GAME BOY COLOR OUTPOST

What can we say? Eg's but a distant memory, and it's time to get back to the business of reviewin' all the great games the developers have promised us. The cream of the crop this month is Tarzan; in case you've missed the movie and Dave's glowing review of the PlayStation game, well, the GBC version is looking strong!



TARZAN

DIGITAL ECLIPSE/ACTIVISION
AVAILABLE NOW



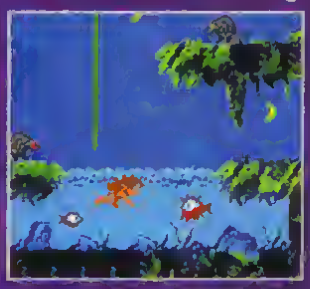
It's simple: get this game! Digital Eclipse have done a superb job of animation and sound design, and the level design is fun and challenging. In the tradition of Super Mario Bros (with vines!). You'll start by playing young Tarzan, but in some levels you'll play as Tarzan's ape friend Tark, Jane, or adult Tarzan. Passwords are given every fourth level, but it takes considerable platforming skills to get to these passwords. In fact, that's my only beef: it's almost too tough to get through each section with the 4 continues available. Expect to play through each set of levels many times before getting the next set.

In addition to all this, Digital Eclipse added a hide & seek game, where one player hides a character in the jungle, and then hands off the game to a friend to find the first. Also, a Paint 'n' Print mode is available, in which you arrange various characters, plants, and props on one of four backgrounds, and print the results on the GB Printer.

Tarzan for Game Boy Color should be considered one of the new classics, building on the foundations of older platformers and using the power of the new GBC to add flash and eye candy. Brilliantly done! Get it now! **A-**















PAC MAN SPECIAL COLOR EDITION

NAMCO
SPRING '99





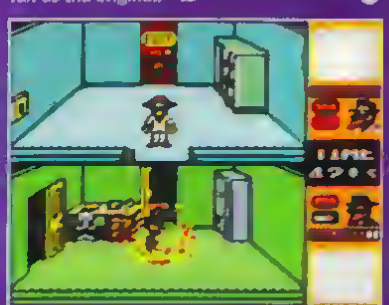
The original Pac Man for Game Boy lacked only one thing: color. The GBC version adds color but removes the full-screen map option, only showing a portion of the course and scrolling as you move. This makes planning a route tougher and has ruined the pace, but it does look good.

Also included is Pac Attack: a version of Tetris where every piece is a three-segment-long column and made up of: a block, a monster, or a Pac Man. When the Pac Man eats monsters become ghosts, Pac Man eats his way through them toward the bottom, and any row filled with blocks gets eliminated. Addicting! **B**

SPY VS. SPY

KEMCO
SPRING '99

Kemco follow Nintendo's lead in porting older games to the GBC with their release of Spy vs. Spy. Faithful to the NES classic, you control the black or the white spy as you search through buildings for secrets and set traps for your opponent. The GBC version allows you to play against the computer or, if you have a friend with this cart and a Link Cable, go head to head to see whose espionage skills are greater. It also includes a training mode that gets you up to speed quickly. There's not a lot of eye candy in this game, but it's still just as fun as the original. **B-**



SURVIVAL KIDS

KONAMI
SPRING '99

In Konami's Survival Kids, you play a ten-year-old who gets shipwrecked while on a cruise with his father, and ends up alone on a deserted island. You are forced to forage for food and learn to build fishing poles, whips, and jump ropes (two sticks and a vine!). This cart hit my desk a scant week before deadline, so I promise to get further into it and give a full review next month. So far I can say it's not as compelling a title as, say, Zelda DX (Nintendo set the bar high!), but there are many puzzles and survival quests. If I could only figure out how to get fire...



METAL SLUG
FIRST MISSION

BY FRANK MARTINEZ JR.

developer/publisher: SNK available: now

When SNK come to mind, one usually correlates them with King of Fighters or another Neo Geo-spawned fighting game. When SNK throws a portable system into the mix, again you think KOF, but there are plenty of other eligible titles to port over. Enter the Neo Geo Pocket: Destined to host a ton of fighting games throughout its lifetime, this hand-held will also be the recipient of another revered SNK franchise, Metal Slug. Within the first week of the system's U.S. launch the action/shooter category has already been filled, and it's not just a meager offering. SNK have provided a wickedly fun miniaturized version of their highly acclaimed franchise.

Aptly titled Metal Slug: First Mission, this portable installment offers the same chemistry as its arcade brethren. Set on an unknown continent, your character Marco has been secretly dropped in behind enemy lines. His mission: infiltrate the enemy force's storage facility, destroy the structure, and capture the evil Guerrilla forces leader, Colonel Bildegaarn. To help him along the way, an assortment of armaments and vehicles will be made available throughout the missions.

Considering this "port" is severely confined within the boundaries of the NGPC's portable 16-bit powerplant, a little creative license was used on SNK's part to ensure the highly compromised graphic conversion would be overshadowed by a classic Metal Slug engine, optimized with deeper gameplay elements and replayability. The twitch action approach was established in previous arcade and console Metal Slug games (and they are all gorgeous 2D beasts), providing the perfect framework for a more extensive portable version. These changes reflect upon the game's engine, as it strays from its quarter-crunching lineage and focuses more on replay value and depth. An energy bar has now been added to keep the action going longer, new emergency ejection scenarios when leaving a damaged vehicle have been implemented, and a mission save feature in now included. In addition, many of the levels contain multiple exit points that offer alternate routes to the final mission, a perfect reason for including the battery back up saves.







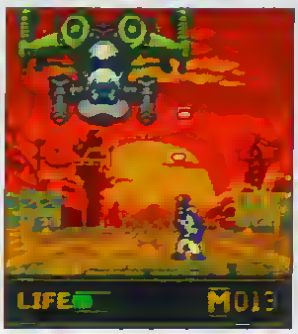
The changes made to MS:FM aren't limited to the gameplay; the level design too has become more platform oriented. Completion is no longer based solely on a linear left to right or vertical start to finish standard set by the original Metal Slug games. MS:FM grants players more areas to explore with the careful use of doorways and hidden passages, ultimately leading to an alternate exit point or a hidden power-up item. Laid out over 16 missions, the game progresses over a multitude of MS stylized terrain, and unique environments ranging from jungles to industrial zones. Graphically, many of the backgrounds maintain the level of quality expected by offering surprising layers of parallax scrolling complimented by an intelligent and attractive palette that doesn't impair the action taking place in the foreground.

When it comes to action, MS:FM does a faithful job of replicating the mayhem that the Metal Slug series is known for. However, this action is dealt a heavy blow by the limitations of the NGPC's button setup. Lacking a third button, accessing your arsenal is a bit of a learning experience, as a quick tap on the Option button will toggle your weapons. As a result, switching between weapons while in the heat of battle just isn't as intuitive as one might hope. Despite this shortcoming, the twitch response (and oft-times forgiving) controls have been preserved. Negotiating your character sprite in MS:FM is very fluid, and just like in the original games, it allows enough flexibility to make jumps that you would have otherwise missed by a few pixels or two.

MS:FM is a testament to the Neo Geo Pocket Color's graphical integrity, which up until this point has not been fully demonstrated. Meticulously animated, MS:FM captures many of the nuances that made the MS series such a unique and memorable gaming experience, ensuring its place in anyone's Pocket library. By annexing changes to the original equation for fun, MS:FM stays true to the level of quality this franchise has set and goes even further by providing added depth for major portable replayability. It exemplifies SNK's mutual respect for the games they make and the people who play them. Ω

A-





SECRETS, BOSSES, & EXTRAS



Although considerably scaled down, many of the characteristics that define Metal Slug have been faithfully retained. From massive bosses that fill the screen to the facial expressions worn by Colonel's Bildegaarn's guerrilla troops, it's all here, neatly fashioned in one tiny 16-meg cart. If this isn't enough to entice you, take into consideration the plethora of secrets to be found throughout, coupled with the wacky Handcar stages. Not seen in any other MS title, this original addition is another bright idea that further enhances your gaming experience. Traversing railroad or spiked terrain too dangerous to walk on, the Handcar offers a mixture of good-old-fashioned button mashing, timing and, most of all, fun.







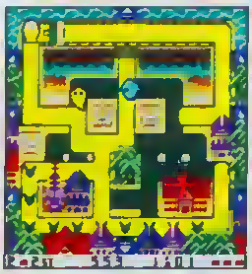
CRUSH ROLLER

BY EDO FEAR

developer: adk publisher: snk available: now

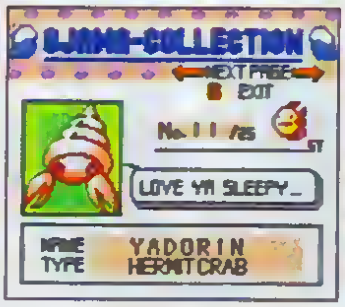
From the old-school arcade to the new-school handheld, Crush Roller puts the fun in your hands

Back in the early '80s, I really wanted to enjoy Pac Man. But racing around avoiding ghosts and eating dots didn't do anything for me; I'd rather avoid homework and eat pizza. Hot on Pac Man's heels was a nearly forgotten clone called Crush Roller, with a similar basic premise: clear the screen, avoid the baddies, and get rid of them when you can. Unfortunately, I ran out of quarters long before I got good (plus I played more Sinistar than anything else), but SNK have brought this arcade classic to their new system, the NeoGeo Pocket Color. And now that I've given this classic game a decent play through, I can't rave enough about it.



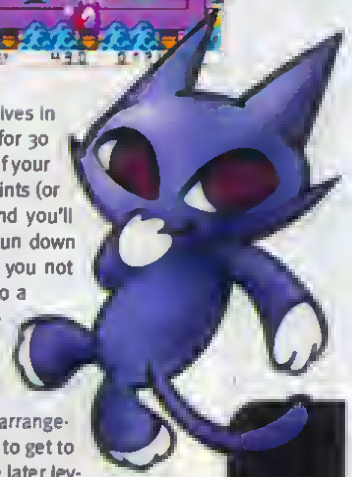
Instead of playing a yellow disc eating dots, you're a paintbrush trying to paint the streets in a series of neighborhoods. Your foes are simply called monsters (although they look like tadpoles), and they come in four different colors and speeds: one is slower, one is about the same speed, and two are quicker; they'll outrun you in a straightaway, but sometimes you can make a series of quick turns and lose 'em. While Crush Roller doesn't have any powerups that allow you to go after the monsters, each screen does have one or two brush rollers that turbo you down a straightaway, and if any monster finds itself in your path, CRUSH!







Additionally, each screen has an irkster that lives in the neighborhood and appears every so often for 30 seconds or so. If the irkster travels across one of your freshly painted streets, they'll leave their footprints (or clawprints or what have you) on the path, and you'll have to repaint those areas. However, if you run down the irkster (with or without the brush rollers), you not only eliminate their annoyance but add them to a collection of irksters. Their are 25 neighborhoods to clear and 25 Irksters to collect, and this is what sets Crush Roller apart from similar eat-and-run games. The neighborhoods are constructed in an upside-down pyramid sort of arrangement, which necessitates a lot of replay in order to get to every level and collect every Irkster. Some of the later levels (3-5, 3-6, 4-5, etc) aren't available until you've cleared other levels; just keep playing and you'll get to them soon enough!



SNK have a great thing going with the NeoGeo Pocket Color and a great lineup of games like King of Fighters R2, Samurai Showdown 2, and Metal Slug 2; Crush Roller adds to that library with addictive gameplay, easy-to-get-into storyline, and just plain fun!

B+

arcade corner

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT



Tekken Tag Tournament should be in arcades as you read this, and Namco's latest addition to their masterful fighting game legacy throws in every feature but the kitchen sink in an effort to keep the franchise alive as it enters the soon-to-be heady days of PS2. Running on the System 12 arcade board, a PS version is not completely out of the question, but it's more likely that the game will come home in enhanced form on PS2.

Among its many features, Tekken Tag Tournament will showcase characters from both Tekken 2 and 3. Baek, Michelle, Jun, and Armor King return from T2 with assorted gameplay tweaks. In addition, plenty of time-release characters will be joining the initial twenty selectable ones, though their identities remain a mystery at this time.



For a hint at the greatest change to Tekken's established gameplay, one need only recall that this latest iteration is called Tag Tournament. Each player selects two characters for combat, and through the use of a new fifth button, can switch between their fighters on the fly. As the new character enters the arena, the now-dormant fighter will slowly regain his life. According to Namco, unlimited combos will now be possible by switching characters during combination attacks. While a character is in mid-juggle and hanging in the air, you can quickly call in your second fighter and finish them off. This should prove to be a most exciting gameplay element.

The Tekken formula was due for a bit of a shake up, and the new tag-team element should be just what the doctor ordered. Look for it in arcades now and salivate at the prospect of an enhanced PS2 version.









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PlayStation



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F-355 FERRARI 3 SCREENS, 1 GOAL

Sega AM2's Yu Suzuki is a busy man right now, as he is currently overseeing both Shenmue and the four-Naomi-board powered F355 Challenge. But for those thinking that he might just be dipping into F355 while concentrating on Shenmue, revel in this comment from Suzuki-san: "I want this to be a game that can train a professional driver." Now that's ambition.

To help achieve this goal, every necessary measure was taken to ensure absolute realism. Top-drawer Japanese drivers such as Naotaka Hattori and Kazuo Shimizu gave their input as to the feel of the game, while everything from the engine note to race track telemetry was sampled for use in the game. And for the first time, Ferrari themselves lent their complete support to a game creator. Even the cabinet gets special attention as the player is treated to a panoramic view (courtesy of three 29-inch monitors) and a near perfect recreation of the F355 cockpit.

Making a game that is absolutely realistic may not translate into a game that's fun to play for everyone, so F355 has been designed for all skill levels. You can choose from three modes (Novice, Intermediate, and Simulator), and four assist functions (stability control, traction control, anti-lock, and intelligent braking system) that can be turned on or off during the race

AUTODROMO NAZIONATE MONZA

Monza, the home track for Ferrari, was constructed way back in 1922 and has gone through many changes over the years. It is located outside of Milan and on race-day is full of the fanatical Tifosi. Everything about the circuit revolves around one team, Ferrari. The track is a high-speed course, consisting of long straights and devious chicanes. This is a marvelous circuit with a rich history.







COURSE MAP







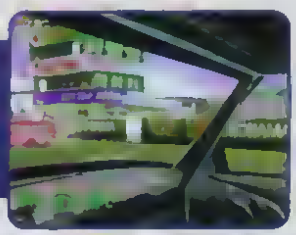


SPORTSLAND SUGO RACING COURSE

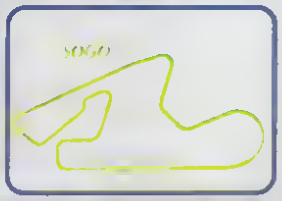
Almost all categories of Japanese races, such as Formula Nippon, JGTC and All Japan F3, are held at this exciting circuit. The challenging track layout consists of numerous low- and mid-range speed corners, with up and down motions to the course—you will need a high level of machine control to win. Especially taxing is the final ascending corner leading into the home stretch.







COURSE MAP





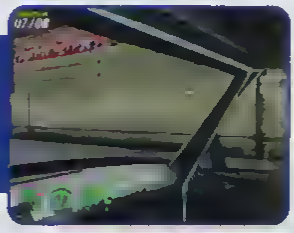




TWIN RING MOTEGI SUPER SPEED WAY

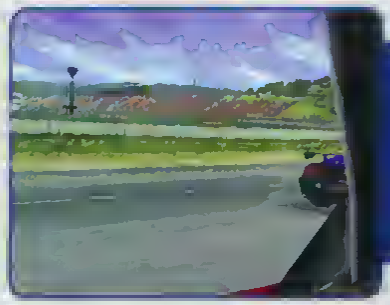
The Twin Ring Motegi course, owned by Honda, has been used for CART and NASCAR racing in recent years. The name Twin Ring comes from the fact that both the American oval and European style road courses are combined together here. F355 Challenge makes use of the oval course only. Since the circuit is wide and the surface is flat, you can keep the car on the limit the entire track.





COURSE MAP



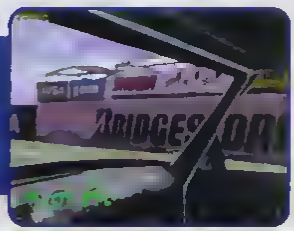




SUZUKA INTERNATIONAL RACING COURSE

This course was constructed by Honda in 1962 as the first race track that could be used for international races. The name Suzuka became well known the world over ever since the circuit began hosting Formula 1 races in 1987. Since the course has a figure-8 layout, corners are laid out evenly, with high speed sections and dips. Many Formula 1 drivers really enjoy this highly technical circuit.





COURSE MAP







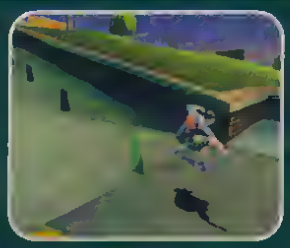


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Gamers Republic
ISSN 1311-0000
0 31441 07950 0
ARCADE CORNER '99
全世界遊戯機器情報
VOL 2 • AUG.1999









Ever dream of doing a Medonna backside over the lip of a pool? Now is your chence and I recommend that you take it, because you won't be able to get any closer to doing the rael thing. You do reelize I em talking ebout the skateboarding trick, right? If not, keep your mind in that gutter you are dwelling in, 'cause you can teer it up in Tony Hawk's Pro Skater.

Neversoft has taken e unique and pragmatic approach to sketeboerding. During an intense session with en eerly ROM, it is safe to sey arm-cheir nay-sayers who think the boards ere glued to the skater's feet, and especially the herdcore 7-ply dignitaries, will find much respect in this title. All the models are rock solid and the collision detection is to the bone. Like the real thing, quick thinking influences eccomplishing tricks in the game. There are huge environments crafted to slice and dice by dope players stringing a line of multiple combos.





Everything familiar with skaters can be found. Reilslide on everything you can imagine—hend rails, planters, curbs and even picnic benches! Empty pools ere available for carving and building a variety of tricks. The downhill or linear levels offer a more farfetched take on skating, sanctioning sensational tricks. What is even more veluable is the fact that many of the game's 10 availeble levels are nonlinear, so you can create your own particular path every time you enter the level. Each of these levels holds secret routes end complete interaction with eny and everything dressed within the aree.



As mentioned earlier, the game was still incomplete, yet it is extremely deep in terms of coupling together tricks. I found myself oftan finding new ways to begin or end 50-50 grinds and huge air. Picking the trick to do is only the half; keeping balance or completing rotation while doing the trick is the other. While grinding or railsliding you will find thet your onscreen persona will lean a bit to the left or right. You will need to tap the controller the opposite direction until he straightens out. It is this amount of control no other skateboarding game has offered before. There are e mélange of tricks elready implemented, and using each of them will become necessary to score high. These tricks ere easy to pull off, end if you hold the buttons down, you can really tweak the trick out edding style end bigger points.

If you heve committed yourself to doing e Nosegrind, just Ollie into en Impossible, end every trick can be interrupted. This is enother important ability that Neversoft identified and integrated with incredible results. Another technical feat is the persistent camera logic, which has an uncanny localization of the onscreen character. Platforming gemes rarely have the tight camera response this game flaunts. Whether you ere pulling half-pipe tricks or tooling your street skills, the camera doesn't miss e beet. The game moves at a delicious frame rate even in two-player mode, which is actually just es fun as the one-player game. No slow down was noticeable during the two-player stint, end the environments do not eppear to have been tailored to eccommodate the different perspectives.





Old-school skaters will immediately recognize Tony Hawk and be given the opportunity to try and land one of his many signature moves. Other New School skaters end members of his Birdhouse crew, join Tony. And look for Ched Muska, Jamie Thomas, Buckey Lasek, Bob Burnquist, Kareem Campbell, Rune Glifberg, Geoff Rowley end Andrew Reynolds to give their best.

gamers' republic sports '99

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

developer: neversoft publisher: activision available: octuber

The E3 shows host a lot of great opportunities for us, and this year was especially memorable. The first day of the show we got to sit down with skateboard denizen, Tony Hawk.

GR: Hi Tony, it's very cool to meet you.
TH: Aww thanks... it's good to be here.

GR: So is this your first time to this kind of trade show?
TH: A video game trade show? Yea, this place is unbelievable. I've been to a few others, but this is the coolest. [Laughs] My son wouldn't know which direction to head first.

GR: So I'll take it he plays video games. Do you play video games too? Or is it just for your sons' sake?
TH: Well, [my son] Riley has been playing Pro Skater a lot. He also plays Spyro, Super Mario 64 and Rugrats. If he saw all of these new versions he would probably have a heart attack. Me, the last time I really got a chance to play a game was Banjo Kazooie. I was up until three in the morning one night trying to get through the last stage and finally had to come to accept it wasn't going to happen.

GR: Any new games here (besides your own of course) that really impress you?
TH: Well I had a chance to get out for a little while and I really like Ready 2 Rumble—Afro Thunder is too cool. I also played some 3Xtreme [looks up] ... it's awful.

GR: (Big grin) Any skating games ever spark your interest, like the arcade game 720?
TH: Yea, a lot. I actually tried to buy one when it came out, but for some reason they wouldn't sell it to me.

GR: Really? You created that trick; if it wasn't for you they wouldn't have a name for it.
TH: Yeah. I tried for a long time; I still don't know what the hell was up back then. I still want to get one. I had it all lined up to get Top Skater actually...

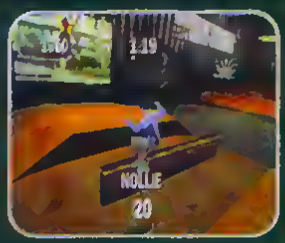
GR: Oh shit, that's bad ass.
TH: (Grinning)...but Erin (his wife) wouldn't let me. Well, she said that there wasn't enough room for the thing and asked me to find a place it could go and I could have it. So I gave up on that too. Otherwise nothing else has really caught my attention. I remember Skate or Die on Nintendo. Man, they tried really hard.

GR: Have you always wanted to do a game?
TH: Yeah! Actually about three years ago I was approached by a guy who was trying to get something going with Midway, but it was for the PC and the engine wasn't right for the game I wanted.



GR: Are you into computers?
TH: Always have been, ever since Amiga. Right now I've got a couple, a Macintosh G3 and a PC.









GR: What made you decide now was the time for a game?
TH: I was kinda' approached by a few different places and people all at once. I had to go around and figure out which one was going to be the best and when I found Activision and saw what they had already created I knew I was going to do it with them. When they showed it to me, they had Bruce Willis as the skater.

GR: Oh yeah...
TH: Later on they had a statue of him in the middle of this fountain and you could do tricks over him, even do tricks off of him, it was pretty funny.

GR: So how do Bob and the fellow members of Birdhouse feel about you doing the motion capture for their signature moves?
TH: Well...[Laughs] Umm... [Grins] I don't know. There are only a couple of the signature moves that I did. I actually had to learn one on the day of the shoot. It was really hard and took some time to figure out. It's a one-footed backside smith grind.

GR: My friends and I use to watch the early Bones Brigade videos before going around town on our boards...
TH: Oh yeah...

GR: ...with you, Lance, Tommy, Steve and Mike.
TH: Oh cool!

GR: I know modern-day vert mainly consists of tweaked out aerial tricks, whereas old-school vert, like in those videos, used a lot of different hand plants. Will there be any hand plants in the game?
TH: [Smiles] You really use to skate, huh? Then you'll really appreciate this. I am working with them on an old-school level and I did a motion capture for a hand plant and would like to see it in the game.

GR: Well Tony, we can't tell you how much we admire you. Thanks for your time.
TH: It was cool talking with you. I hope you like the game when it's finished.

AN INTERVIEW WITH TONY HAWK

Back for another try with belligerent football, 989 has set out to put all of last year's shortcomings aside, and is looking to run the ball straight up the middle and through the "Blitz." Using a slightly tweaked engine from GameDay '98 and '99, NFL Xtreme did not deliver the visual pizzazz or punishing tackles you would think a game with the Xtreme logo might have. I, like many others, was not impressed with Sony's debut of "Xtreme" football. There were only a basket-full of voice samples, tackles and celebrations, making the fourth quarter feel and look a whole lot like the first quarter. NFL Xtreme 2 attempts to improve on last year by offering a truckload of brand-new taunts along with over 200 new player animations. While the game is still in its preview stage, it is obvious the game has improved in many aspects.





From the get-go, players will be welcomed with a very friendly menu system. Starting a new game and getting on the field is very straightforward and no-nonsense. Creating your own player, signing on new players and building your own team is also very intuitive. There are four different play modes: Quick Start has you pick the team, then it is off to the field; Season shows a game breakdown over the sixteen week schedule; Playoff mode is a four-game battle for the trophy; and Tournament hosts up to eight players to rally their team through a single-elimination competition. There is also a special mode that can be set in the options, where by removing first downs you'll have a limited number of plays to make a touchdown. To counterbalance this added difficulty, you can pass from anywhere, including past the line of scrimmage.

Since the game refreshes first down conversions at every twenty yards, a running game is not going to be a crucial and vital part of play strategies. Instead, expect to throw a lot of deep passes, sprinkled lightly with a running play for the sake of mundane and expected play calls. Multiple laterals are also going to give experienced players something to fine-tune and shame their opponents with. The playbook itself is fairly basic and only offers the most pretentious offense calls appropriate for "ShowTime" football. It goes for the defense as well, serving up a healthy offering of Smear the Queer.

Without question, the game is brimful of insane wrestling-type (of the WWF kind) tackles and after-the-play hits, along with some fancy foot moves to avoid such attacks. While running with the ball, players can jump and flip over oncoming traffic, though if caught the defense can execute a bevy of brutal undertakes.

Many of the first game's trash-talking phrases became redundant and, to be honest, quite annoying after the tenth time hearing them, so this year Sony has recorded so many different phrases that it's unlikely you'll hear the same one twice in a game. Another new addition this year includes NFL player's faces mapped onto their onscreen counterparts. After a glitzy tackle or humiliating touchdown, players will take off their helmets to reveal bruticus faces as they taunt the other team. It is this type of added detail 989 is implementing to set its game as a standard against which all others will be compared.

XTreme 2 is due out this summer in time for the first NFL kick-off, and should be appreciated by fans of quick-fix football.

















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NFL XTREME 2

developer/publisher: 989 studios available: july

The new era of extreme sports is definitely gaining a larger-based audience each year – mainly because those who watch these insane competitions are a sadistic bunch who sit patiently to witness a punishing miscalculation or wipeout so that they can tell the first person they come across about what they saw. This, of course, causes the next person to comb the channels to check it out for him or herself. Then with a tenacious appetite for the worse, they too lie and linger for the likely. Extreme snowmobiling and SnoCross are two of these such sports, and the names alone should give you good reason why the curious watch and wait.

Pushing the machines and the riders to the limit, SnoCross racing is very similar to Motocross: high speeds, multiple turns and equal amount of time in the air as on the track. Extreme snowmobiling is all about maximizing the natural topography before you, whether it is skipping across a small pond as a quicker route or jumping across an interstate, just because you can. Though a few years ago a snowmobile game may have seemed superficial and questionable, the sport has blown up, and it is no wonder why EA has followed the snowball effect to capture the market.

Sled Storm is being developed in Canada by Z-Axis, who include on their team folks who worked on Re-Boot. Nice physics have been implemented on each of the sleds, allowing players to feel the distinct terrains outfitted on the different tracks. This includes sliding across the ice and bogging down in the mud. Often times a marker displaying the direction of the track can be run down to find a more straightforward path. On the snow, players will need to lean into corners to yield sharper turns, while in flight keeping the sled even and balanced will be necessary. Points are given for mid-air tricks performed during jumps and will translate into cash money for upgrades needed for the advanced tracks.

Pulling off unbridled tricks is just as important as finishing in first. Fusing button and controller commands, players will have over 50 tricks and combinations to toy with and score big with. Landing the tricks will even be a factor the player will need to tool and perfect. Inside, the game has six SnoCross tracks to conquer and eight "Open Mountain" trails to cut up as well. The SnoCross levels can be thought of as an introduction to the more hardcore Open Mountain areas, where multiple paths can dictate shorter routes and more variety of conditions to deal with.

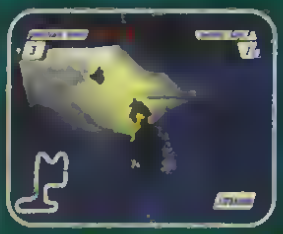












Even in this early pre-production ROM, the game hosts some very classy visuals, backed by a very playable frame rate. Players will be able to feel a true sense of speed while racing. There is a four-player option for the game, and though both of these attributes are predictably tallored, the game offers solid fun overall. Some clever weather effects are represented skillfully as well: During a sunny day, riders will be able to foresee up-and-coming turns with the distance fading into view nicely; a hazy fog gets thrown into the equation the higher up the mountain players get; and eventually there are nighttime castoffs to deal with. This is where things on the track really get to be a venture.

There are the usual beta bugs and optimizing that is expected to be organized by the game launch, so I'll save any contrary opinions until it is ready for review. In all, though, Sled Storm is the best snowmobiling game on the PS yet. It is also the only one, and compared to the more conventional racing titles out there, Sled Storm is the coolest take on the sport yet.











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SLED STORM

developer: z-axis publisher: take 2 interactive available: now

NFL Blitz 2000: The Arcade Simulator. I bet you had to read that one twice. Well it is true. The tumultuous epitome of run-and-gun football has coma to a delicate crossroad. The developers have given the game a whole new scope and broadened the experience for those who still prefer the traditional take of console football. The game is still hardcore action and hosts big scoring plays, and with all of the new features that are found in this game, it has set itself on the top tier.

From the gat go, Blitz 2000 looks a lot bettar. The front-end menus are sharp and comfortable to peruse. In motion, the game is beautiful to look at and provides nimble controls, thanks to a smooth frame rate and added animations. The players still have the whittled look to them, but its arcade equivalent sports the same look, giving justification to their appearance.





On offense the gameplay has rigged a more sanguine interface, in which you will be allowed to map specific buttons to each of the receivers. Instead of using the questionable directional passing system some of us found frustrating. Aside from the icon passing tha improved AI forces you to experiment with more of the playbook. Use a certain play too often and you can be sure that sucker will be picked off. Audibles are present as well, permitting judgement calls at the last second.



The computer gets progressively more challenging as the season moves into the later weeks. It starts to become frustratingly obvious toward week 10, when interceptions and fumbles are more fan mail than an actual pass completion. The icon passing, or what Midway has coined "Blitz passing," is nice, but loses some of the originality the original served. I am still deciding whether or not I like using it, but it is admirable to see it supplied.

An unsettled point that needs to be mentioned is the open collision detect. When running with the ball, the man chasing you can dive from a ridiculous distance and instead of grabbing you by the heels, magically gain some extra "oomph" to carry out a clothesline move. It may be trite when putting everything into perspective, but I think the runner should beat the tackle.

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NFL BLITZ 2000

developer/publisher: midway available: august

Console football on the PlayStation got a swift kick in the pigskins last year. The surprisingly accurate conversion of the arcade game NFL Blitz re-created fast action, think-later game play. Until the breakthrough title was released, companies concentrated solely on capturing the simulated, slower-paced feel of actual football. Not here; big money plays and barbaric tackles dictate the game influance.

Updates are a crapshoot when it comes to sports games. The energy can be easily mishandled, misdirected and often times lost. It is a bit haunting just how much Midway has integrated into this year's incarnation, proving they have a dedicated interest in providing an exceptional and unparalleled experience. Let's start with the familiar updated rosters and a more diverse playbook.

Each player has been fitted with a body build that better reflects his true-life physique and field position. This year the Cleveland Browns and Tennessee Titans join the others. Teams now have their own specific playbook and even more impressive is the fact that you can customize the playbook by creating your own plays, and up to 18 can be split up evenly for both offense and defense: Run your receiver up the slant; make him spin to juke his defender then streak deep down field. Assign individual tasks to your defense, having them cover certain zones, playing man to man or rushing. This feature alone can be tooled with for hours and will add a new dimension to the gameplay.







The game itself plays extremely well, but there are moments of slow-down that puzzle me. The game is quick natured but is not processing a huge amount of polys and calculating speedy field adjustments, so the slowdown that was evident in two out of the five camere angles was curious.

The ability to play with four players is a huge sell and the "On fire!" mode is the perfect, add-insult-to-injury companion. Subtle additions have been made too. Here's a more blatant situation. It is raining during a game. Player's jerseys will continuously get more fatiguad as the gama develops. Get the picture? For two years running, Midway and NFL Blitz bring quick-fix gameplay to new heights and standards.

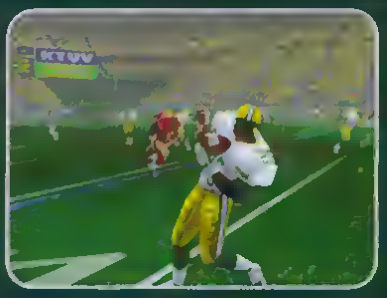
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NFL BLITZ 2000

developer/publisher: midway available: august







Recently we had the opportunity to spend a day with the Visual Concepts team—to be precise, a full 10 hours. Fortunately, we got to play the most recent version of NFL and NBA 2000. We also had a few words with Tim Walter, Technical Director of Visual Concepts. He is involved in all aspects of the game development for both current projects, including game design, code design and task management. He coded the extraordinary 3D engine for NFL 2000 along with the deep weather effects, audio streaming and, aside from the AI behaviors and the physics model, all of the game systems. The same 3D engine is being used for NBA 2000, and the menus and animation between the two products are sharing the same code modules for effects. We spoke about the Dreamcast's capabilities and the word going around about Sony's next system.

GR: Well, let's skip the formalities and get to your thoughts on Sony's recent announcement and system demos.
TW: Okay. To be quite honest, I didn't see anything on Sony's demos that we couldn't do on the Dreamcast. I think most of the people working with the Dreamcast have been busy developing games as opposed to demos. Sony's demos are cool and it's not a bad thing; it shows what the hardware can do. But they are only demos.



GR: How about the Gran Turismo demo?
TW: Well, I haven't seen anyone do a really nice driving game on the Dreamcast with high quality textures and visuals, but it can definitely be done. Sony has a year to improve current technology, so the system will be more powerful, but currently Dreamcast can do everything Sony is showing.



GR: So Sega's new system won't be obsolete next year?
TW: The Dreamcast is so far beyond Nintendo 64 and PlayStation. The gap between those systems and the Dreamcast is vast. When the new Sony system is launched it will be a bit above the Dreamcast, but I don't think like the jump the Dreamcast has made, not by a long shot.

GR: Technically what has been your feeling writing code for the Dreamcast?
TW: The best thing about it is that we can run at 60 hz. It has been such a long time since people have actually run at 60 hz. Commodore 64, Amiga, Genesis and SNES were all running at 60 hz. Then, when developing for the PlayStation, everyone was content with running 30 or 20 and in some really bad cases 15 hz. That really detracted and gnawed away at me. I didn't like that. So it's really good seeing it back at 60. You've played the game. You know it not only looks great but also plays and feels right. You've got instant response to this stuff.

GR: Okay then, since you're from across the waters (Europe) do you hold the same respect for American football as international football (better known to us as Soccer)?
TW: [Smiles] Umm...well. American football—you guys wearing all sorts of pads, you are sissies [laughing]. But to be honest, I would rather play this game than any soccer game. Soccer is in my blood, I grew up on it, but I really enjoy American football too. I am a big 49ers fan.

GR: Well the Niners, as well as every other NFL team should give you much respect. The game is going to set a whole new standard in video game sports. Thanks for your time.
TW: It was good talking with you.

soccer
baseball
basketball
football
full contact sports
hockey
racing

gamers' republic sports '99

AN INTERVIEW WITH TIM WALTERS

Technical Director · Visual Concepts

Sega Sports has a strong heritage. Not necessarily the most consistent, but definitely one of the most ambitious. In the height of the Sega Genesis' 16-bit reign, sports games went through a major overhaul to try and deliver a truly unique feel and an uncommonly innovative approach to each different sport. It has been a long slumber for the Sega camp, but instead of sleeping they have been conspiring to dumfound the competition. At the recent E3, Sega's NFL 2000 came out of the huddle looking for anything in reach to tackle.





It is clear to see that some hankering for unrivaled and inventive gameplay is still present. With just a glance, you can easily get lost in the game's visual pizzazz. The graphic power of the Dreamcast is scary: there are particular situations where you can actually see and identify the player's faces through their helmets. Ocular grandeur will be common place on the Dreamcast though, and like any great game, play mechanics will prevail over graphic panache.

Getting a game started is a bit different than any other menu system currently used in any kind of game. Options are arched across the top and bottom part of the screen, and by using the analog pad you will sweep across the different choices. Many will not understand this when they encounter it for the first time. Reconditioning one's self from the usual assortment of endless taps and button presses will be a necessary task. Every available option will be onscreen at once, eliminating the scroll.



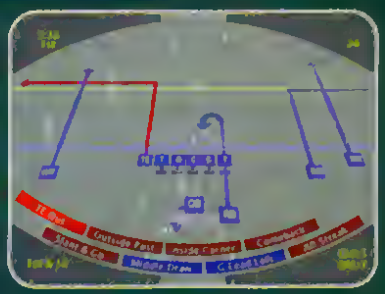
Even nicer are the onscreen play calls. Each play you browse through will appear onscreen; in exactly the same pattern, the players will run or block. So, if you are playing as the Dallas Cowboys and the slant has Michael Irving stopping at the 45-yard line, you will know precisely when to let go of the ball. It goes for defense too: a 3-4 defense will plot the exact real estate the defensive back will protect.

Playing the game will even force players to renovate the way they play offense in console football. Every game to date has had the player running the same initial pattern once the ball is snapped: Run back. Run back 10 or 15 yards, find a safe place to stop then hurl the ball 20 to 25 yards and hope you get enough for the 1st down. Not here: the Quarterback can scramble but you will need to keep him in the pocket to allow maximum time to find an open receiver. Drop too far back and you will quickly learn to stop doing it.

Like every other aspect, running the ball has never been more vital and accurate in a football game. Like I reported last month, Visual Concepts tooled some painstakingly accurate two-men motion captures. This allows the best representation of what specifically happens at the line of scrimmage. Openings will be exposed and vulnerabilities easy to take advantage of. The motion-capturing process allows the most accurate depiction of trying to run the ball through the middle. It is not to say that you will be making a string of 20-yard runs, but when you are at 3rd and three to go, a wise running call could go the distance.

The word spoken by some at E3 was that the game was going to be online in a more indirect sense, but official word is that nothing will be done until next year. The VMU is still going to be used for calling plays unbeknownst to his or her opponent as well as saving individual plays. This alone will add an innovative dimension to the game. On screen you may pick a wide out, when in reality, by using the VMU, you actually call a halfback option. This goes for the defense too. Make your opponent think you are calling a full out blitz when you are taking a more conservative man-to-man coverage. The new era of sports is a reality and NFL 2000 is going to cast a permanent shadow over its predecessors.





The ever-popular Replay mode will eat up just as much time as playing through a game. Watching and studying the players' movements and tendencies could have you changing professions to become a coach!

gamers' republic sports '99

NFL 2000

developer: visual concepts publisher: sega available: september

NBA 2000 is being sculpted into a masterpiece, not risking any shortcuts by its developer, Visual Concepts. Maybe you have heard of them, especially as of late. The game was admittedly further from completion than the other title being developed by VC, but it indisputably had all the makings of an exceptional game. Courtside fans will for the first time get an intimate understanding and feel for the game of basketball. The control is on track, the interface is boss and the action is unwavering.

AI is huge in this game. It is structured to represent individual player proclivities and team tactics, along with offensive and defensive pressures. It would seem obvious, but until now no other game has created any sort of relationship between a forward and a guard, or any player situation for that matter. After coming to grips with the insane visuals, the next thing to grab you will be the adeptness to each different team and, for that matter, player. The team at VC has made sure to provide the most hardcore basketball simulator ever conceived, not compromising graphic detail in the sake of AI and vice versa.

There are a number of different passes, touch passes, dunks and lay-up situations, but don't think you will be able to have Shawn Bradley dish a "no-look" to Cedric Ceballos or drive Muggsy Bogues in for a monster dunk, just because there are all of these moves in the game. None of the players will deviate from their real-world devices, thanks to the record number of different player models. Having the moves accessible is one thing, but finding that only a certain set are available depending on the team and player used will surprise those trying to shoot 3s with Scott Williams.

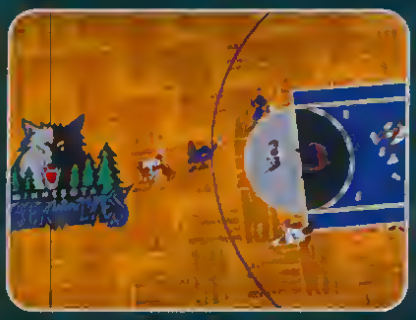
Speaking of Scott, if you know what he looks like on the court, you will be blown away by his and all the others' appearance in the game. Everyone has been masterfully represented and is easily recognizable. It will take a few games to really start to appreciate this level of authenticity, but when it hits you, you will be awe struck. Facial expressions make it clear to see Shaq is ready



to blast through a line to bring to the hole as his eyes stretch open and his mouth tightens. You won't notice these keen animations because they are so subtle, but the ambience they provide is unparalleled. Even Karl Malone's Rogaine spot is present. Sorry Karl.

For as much AI and intricacies VC has spun into the game, even more respect goes to them for flaunting the speedy 60 frames per second the game provides. It moves at a very nice pace. The action on the court is so smooth, it may take you until the third or fourth quarter of your first game to realize that the action going on outside of the court is just as intense. Each arena is modeled down to the seat count. The scaffolding, light fixtures and every ambient detail are represented to provide the most genuine appearance to date. The crowds in New York are going to be more active and unsettled than in Washington. You'll notice single to full rows of scorers tables, players on the benches and, get this, actual coaches. That's right. You will see different coaches, doing what they do, whether it is stomping back and forth or kneeling and just keeping a hawk's eye on the action.

Playing the game is amazing. For once, you will have to know exactly who you are and what you can actually do. The game forces quick, intelligent thinking followed by precise button commands. Letting go of the ball at the optimal point of a jump shot will dictate whether it is a brick or a bucket. If you are looking to dunk, and dunk, and do some more dunking, you will be sadly disappointed to know so much more is involved in playing the game. For me, this fall is going to be roundball heaven on the Dreamcast.









Not until you see the game in motion will you even begin to understand how far video games have come. Everything in the arena is animated and you will be able to see different spins on the ball, depending on how it rolls off the player's fingers.

gamers' republic sports '99

NBA 2000

developer: visual concepts publisher: sega available: october

world republic

[i] We have more cool Dreamcast reviews, complete with scores, just in time... after all, more and more DC imports like E.G.G. will be snapped up by U.S. publishers this year. Look for Aca Combat 3, a huge sequal, and Konami's Gungage, too.

World Republic Review • developer AM1 publisher Sega • available in japan now

dynamite deka 2

A perfect Model 2 conversion on DC, and it's a beat 'em up!



It's kind of ironic that Sega's home systems, up to now, have been notoriously feeble when compared to their arcade counterparts. During the years that the Saturn was "in effect," it was also a sort of Golden Age for Sega's Model 2 (and later Model 3) titles in arcades. We were given 60-fps action, glorious high-res RGB displays, and truly monstrous polygonal horsepower. And despite the fantastic arcade gameplay demonstrated in Saturn conversions of Model 2 titles, like Sega Rally and Virtual On, how many of us would have paid the big bucks for a perfect graphic conversion as well? Imagine a perfect-looking Daytona, Virtua Fighter 2 with all the backgrounds, or games like Manx TT and Virtua Cop 2 with all the resolution and speed intact? Yes, that would have been video game justice, but the arcade to console performance ratio is very rarely that fair or timely...until now.



Dynamite Deka 2 is a late-generation Model 2 arcade game, and Dreamcast is a contemporary Model 3-crushing home console, so yes, this conversion is absolutely perfect. The coolest underlying point here is that even if DD2 was powered by the current standard of Sega arcade hardware, Naomi, it would still be a perfect port due to the strategy of shared architecture between console and arcade. And although Deka 2's Model 2 standards are now less than spectacular when compared to hardware monsters like Sonic Adventure and Shenmue, the fact remains that any "Model" powered arcade game is benefitting from unlimited flexibility, specs pumped up and modified by any number of extra DSP chips, where price and portability is no objective. That's why we haven't seen absolutely dead-on Model 3 ports on Dreamcast yet; the nature of Sega's Model series of arcade beasts is so custom (reflecting precisely the needs of every AM team at the time, regardless of price) that simple polygon shifting specs mean very little. When it comes to Model hardware design, considerations such as home console translations have never really been a factor.

That said, it's time to discuss two merits of Dynamite Deka 2 as a home console title. If you're familiar with the first Dynamite Deka (a.k.a. Die Hard Arcade), you'll find practically the same beat 'em up gameplay in this sequel. The setting, similar to the design of the *Die Hard* films, has changed focus from a single skyscraper with multiple rooms to a massive ocean liner with many rooms (and eventually a secret island where the bad guys are operating from). In another new design twist, there are now three











A. DD2's artist goes nuts with this incredible illustration of the ravishing Miss Lardleaf, located in the Art & Sound test. Valuable extras like this and new stages can be yours. B. One of DD2's action interludes, involving Willis-esque Bruno's "success"-ful bail from a speeding cycle. C. One of DD2's many silky smooth real-time cinematics. D. This is another extra: a very cool scrolling & zooming 14-page comic book







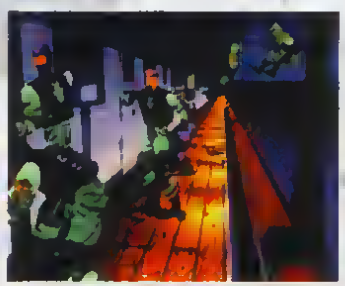
different missions to tackle, each offering slightly different approaches to the storyline, but ultimately they all share the same variety of rooms, just in a new sequence. You fight from room to room, almost like the arenas of a typical 3D fighter, and the game loads for a second or two between each one (obviously the arcade game had no loading, but it's so quick on DC you should have no complaints). Also, just like the original, the link from room to room is often separated by CG event movies and/or action sequences that require you to press a button or direction in time with an on-screen cue. Good timing is rewarded by cool action animation, while bad timing tends to stick you with an extra fight, halfway between one room and the next.

The control and attack style in Dynamite Deka 2 may find its roots in the Virtua Fighter series, as the interaction between characters feels very similar to VF. Tap-tap moves, linkable throws, and subtle direction-plus-button combinations are the standard, but unlike VF or similar fighters, it's all executed in go-anywhere 3D. And just like the original, it all feels a little too stiff. There's no strafe, no focus change (to switch your attacks over to another enemy), and the collision is very imprecise. However, there's a decent selection of attack moves, extremely satisfying grab/throw combinations, and the weapons scattered about the rooms are really fun to use. Besides brutal rapid-fire machine guns, various clubs, iron bars, and bow & arrows, you'll have access to explosive ordinance like the rocket launcher or bazooka. Firing one of these bad boys into the fray provides you with a huge fireball or a spiralling mushroom cloud, and a dramatic camera pan ensues to show the poor fools going airborne in the midst of an all-powerful blast radius. It's very cool. The screen fills with enemies, portions of the environment can be blown away, and the enemies demonstrate some impressive (surprisingly resourceful) AI at times.

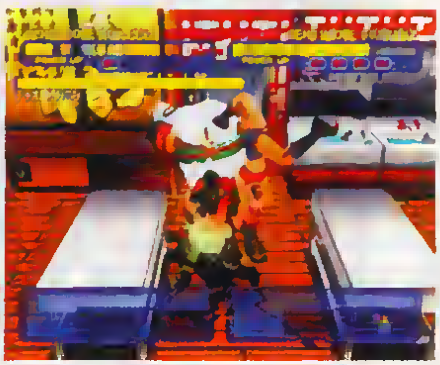
However, it all feels very basic somehow, and you can be extremely cheap. I discovered that the classic Final Fight/Streets of Rage cheapy move can be used to great effect in Dynamite Deka 2. Continuously punching or kicking in timed intervals, without going into a combo, will paralyze almost any enemy. You can even lock three to four enemies in this cheap move at once; they can't do a thing about it, and it actually kills them faster than any throw, combo, or weapon blast. It's more fun to use all the weapons or the cool linkable throws, but the fact remains that you can be very cheap, and it's especially apparent in the two-player versus mode. Ah well...some day we'll be playing 3D beat 'em ups like Deka or Fighting Force with the controls, collision, and fairness of a game like Power Stone. The genre still offers some of the best two-player action (and Dynamite Deka 2 is no different), so let's hope that day comes soon.

In the end, Dynamite Deka 2, just like the original, is way too short. Each of the three missions is good for about 25 minutes of action, but since they share overlapping rooms and CG intermissions, it's not like you can say there's over an hour of unique beat 'em up action. The graphics are very clean and at 60fps, immediately superior to the arcade game in every way, (thanks to the DC's high quality texture) filtering, and the sound and music is pretty much exact. The gameplay offers plenty of variety in regular bad guys, tough bosses, and cool weapons across everchanging backgrounds, and there's artwork, mini-games, and extra levels to reveal and explore by beating each mission. Dynamite Deka 2 is good, shortlived head-smashing fun for two players.









World Republic says ... Dynamite Deka 2 ... fun two player beat 'em up, but it ends too soon. It is very replayable though, thanks to cool weapons and solid graphics.

dynamite deka © sega 1999.

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World Republic Review • developer Namco publisher Namco • available in japan now

ace combat 3

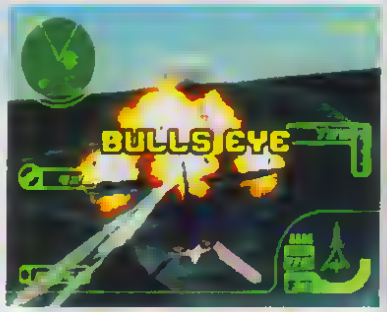
Namco's latest airborne opus takes it easy, but are the enhanced graphics and story enough?



Namco are the absolute masters of presentation. After seeing R4, and now Ace Combat 3, there is little doubt of this in my mind. From the wonderfully designed booklet that comes with the import to the clean and sleek graphic design of the front end, Namco once again present their gameplay to you on a silver platter. What can I say? I'm a sucker for good design.



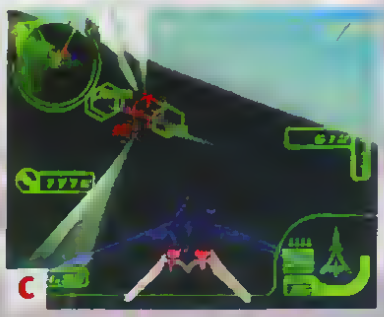
Like R4, the gameplay this time around in Ace Combat has been shorn of its edge a bit when compared with its predecessors. This is not a harsh criticism, but merely a way to point out that both games have obviously been re-targeted at more of a mainstream audience; both have become a little bit less esoteric. For instance, the two previous Ace Combat games certainly carried more currency with those who had an above-average affinity for fighter jets and dry sims. AC3 is set more appealingly in the future, with more outrageous craft, loads of voice (enough for two discs), cut scenes and a gaggle of awesome-looking FMV. Also, the missions have become more structured and story driven, lending them a bigger feel, as if they're part of a much larger scenario, though some may deride this shift. Ace Combat 3 has been made easier and more exciting, to the detriment of longevity and challenge, I'm afraid. As I said, the edge has been dulled, but the overall game's just so technically proficient, this deficiency can be almost over-







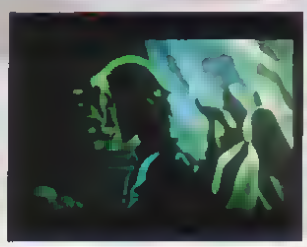




Super battle action! (A) First I attack the city in daylight (B) Then I attack them at night (C) And now I sink their battleship!









FMV *Namco always impress with their FMV, and AC 3 is no exception. Utilizing the increasingly common mixture of cels and 3D backdrops, the story sequences here are better than anything yet seen in this series.*



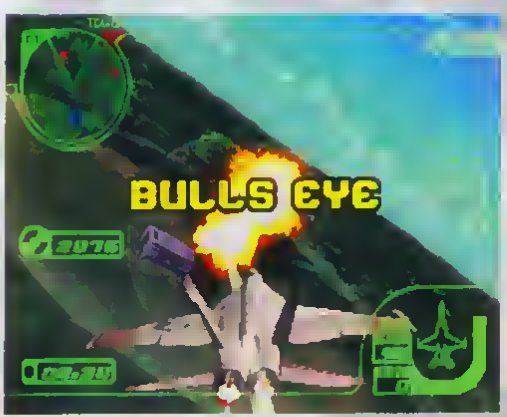


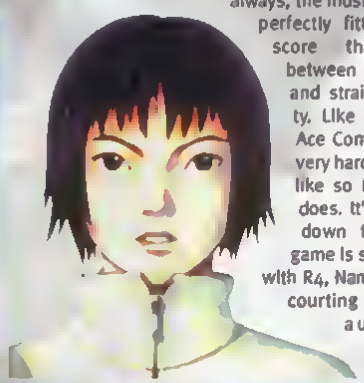


looked. Previous Ace Combat players will definitely like the action that's here, they just won't be able to really sink their teeth into it. Newcomers will probably like it a lot, as the rewards are not hidden, they're all on the surface.

Ace Combat 3, like R4, probably represents the present and future state of the art on PlayStation. More than just pushing the hardware, Namco are using their artistry to make the most of their software. Obviously, the distant ground just becomes a bunch of tiles as you climb and everything is very lo-res, but the way the textures are designed and the way objects smoothly appear through fog give the game a very sophisticated look in the end. There's just enough polygonal detail on the surface too to suggest far more complexity than is actually there. The clever gradients of the sky and horizon, the perfectly sized sun and lens flare effect, and the wisps of cloud zipping by create an incredible 32-bit impression of being in the sky.

There's a lot to like here. Ace Combat 3 puts on an incredible face and entices you with its fast paced, sim-like gameplay. The futuristic look and feel is a great direction for the series, and allowed Namco to design some cool planes and even take you up into space for a spell. As always, the music is first rate, a perfectly fitting electronic score that vacillates between a cool breeze and straight-up intensity. Like many sequels, Ace Combat 3 is trying very hard to please, and like so few, it actually does. It's a bit of a let down then that the game is so very easy. As with R4, Namco seem to be courting a fresh audience–one with less patience. ✻

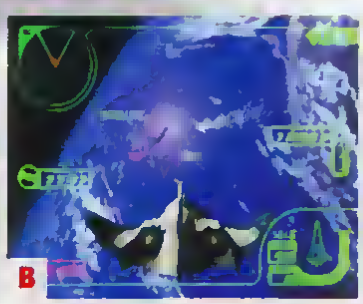




Los Angeles
ロサンゼルス

Tokyo
東京







Witness some of the outrageous aircraft available in AC3! (A) Look at this Ruten-ish-looking plane. (B) Leave the atmosphere in this space faring vehicle. (C) Refueling can be done automatically or manually.

World Republic says "This is another incredibly well put together package from Namco and, like R4, is unfortunately much easier than its predecessor. ■

GR 010

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World Republic Preview • developer/publisher hudson • available in japan now

elemental gimmick gear

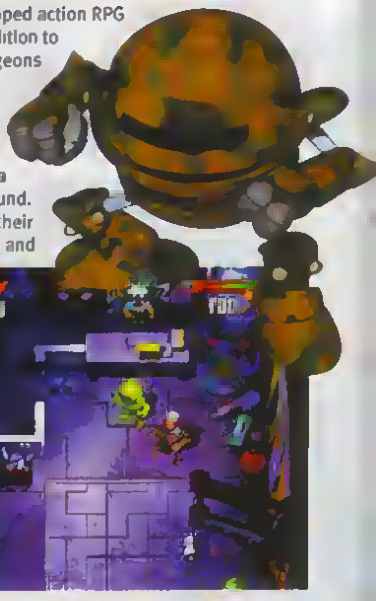
Intense 3D battles and 2D dungeon crawling await you in Hudson's latest Dreamcast title





Hudson's second Dreamcast effort is the Birthday-developed action RPG Elemental Gimmick Gear (EGG). The game is a solid addition to the Dreamcast game lineup, featuring well-crafted 2D dungeons crawling with unique 3D battles.

EGG kicks off with a beautiful opening cinema that fills you in on the back-story of the world you are about to enter. The city of Fogna is trying to rebuild from a devastating disaster. During an excavation in one of Fogna's ruins, a Sleeping Man and an Elemental Gimmick Gear (EGG) are found. The civilization reverse-engineers the EGG and creates their own, putting the machines to work on chores, military uses, and recreational battles. One hundred years later, mysterious tentacles arise from the depths of Fogna, driving the city and its occupants into the ground. At the same time, the Sleeping Man awakes from his 1,000 year nap.

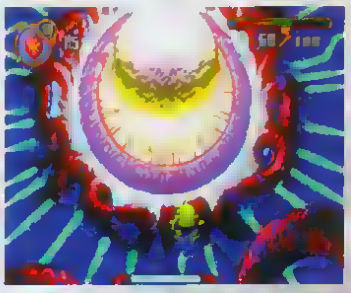


As the sleeping man, you set out to return Fogna to normality, to set things right in a world gone wrong. Throughout your quest you learn just what exactly has occurred to take things to their current state, and just what the powers that be want of Fogna.

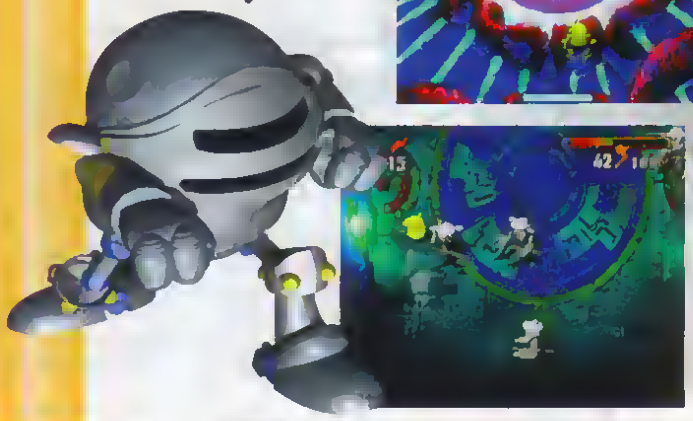
The bulk of EGG's gameplay takes place in a traditional 2D overhead perspective: as the Sleeping Man you enter your EGG, a mech-styled, egg-shaped contraption, and set out on your adventure. As you travel from dungeon to dungeon, you must use your EGG's current abilities to solve environment-related logic puzzles; this is the true beauty of console action RPGs. EGG's puzzles are logical, yet difficult, making you use the full-range of your mech's abilities. A simple example is you having to use your fire elemental to keep an enemy from moving, then zapping said enemy with your freeze ray to finally push him onto a pressure-sensitive block that opens a door into the next room of the dungeon.

Elements earned throughout the game can be used to solve puzzles or for combat, during which lower-level enemies such as bugs or simple EGGs are fought in a 2D perspective. Most of the time enemies can be defeated with a simple punch, but tougher critters may require you to use your spin technique, a move that consists of pulling all of the EGG's appendages into the core of the contraption and spinning wildly, inflicting damage onto yourself and onto anything that dares get in your way. Boss battles are done in 3D; all the rules of EGG's 2D world apply, but now you can see everything in fully textured-mapped, polygon splendor.

EGG is a fan's game: action RPG players will get their money's worth from just the basic gameplay concepts and the 2D/3D graphics. Gamers looking for something more will be initially disappointed by the lack of charismatic characters (a man in an egg-shaped robot isn't too interesting) and old-school gameplay. That said, anyone who keeps EGG turned on for more than an hour will eventually be won over by the logical puzzles and the beauty of the 2D world.









Solid puzzles and entertaining boss battles co... all built Action RPG experience. Fans of the genre will enjoy themselves greatly. B

elemental gimmick gear © hudson 1999.

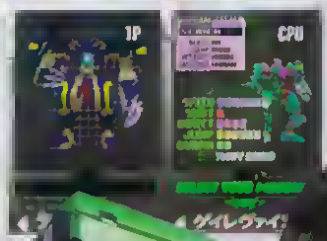
World Republic Review • developer/publisher hudson • available in japan now

last legion

It may be the poor men's version, but hey, at least we got one!







Nintendo 64 fans looking for a little Virtual On-style gameplay have finally got something to cheer about. Wait, maybe cheer is the wrong word... a mild yippee! may be in order though. Hudson's long-lost mech battle game, shown at nearly every E3 since the 64 was born, has popped out overseas where the system is all but six feet under and, not surprisingly (it's been in development for quite some time), it's not a bad little game for having been embarked on prior to Ram Pak availability. If you've ever played V-On or Reverthion, you know the breed. Two nimble mechs outfitted with hand cannons and rocket boosters square off in arena type battles until one goes boom. In Last Legion UX, Hudson take things a step further with varied, multi-tiered terrain and places to hide and wait for your target to make his or her move. The control is easy to pick up, cameras seem up to the task at hand, and the mech design is surprisingly diverse and attractive. Slightly mundane graphics and overall execution keep Legion from the lofty V-On goal, but overall if you can live with the Japanese menus, this is one import worth looking into.





World Republic Review • developer KCET publisher konami • available in japan now

gungage

KCET dropped the ball with this one. Gungage just squeezes by on its few merits.



A hint of anticipation took hold of me as Gungage was booting up. The screenshots I had seen looked good, and the character art provided with the game was above average – a telltale sign, I thought, of a sense of commitment on Konami's part. Well, any hopes I had had for the game summarily evaporated in the first few minutes, a victim of the game's stiff control and almost first-generation engine. However, things improved in stops and starts as the game went on and it ended up being a borderline decent experience.

Gungage starts you out with one character, the oddly named Wakle, and you traverse eight levels of third-person shooting action, the highlight of which are the boss encounters. They're all fairly easy to defeat, but generally large and well designed. Between these occasionally impressive skirmishes, however, are rather poor looking levels with dull enemies hanging about.







There is a bit of replayability to Gungage, as you must beat the game a few times to open up all of the different characters. This isn't totally pointless, as the new characters have different weapons, and the levels themselves play out a little differently. In the end, though, the gameplay is just too slow and too stiff to be bags of fun, and frankly, I expected a lot more from Konami.



World Republic says: "Gungage isn't terrible, but when the box says Konami I expect a little more than decent action, minimal control and barely adequate graphics. Good boss encounters."

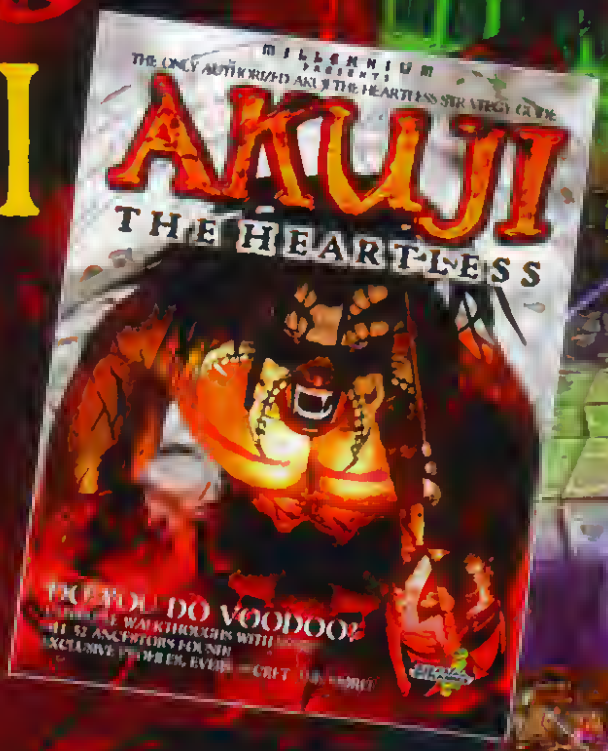
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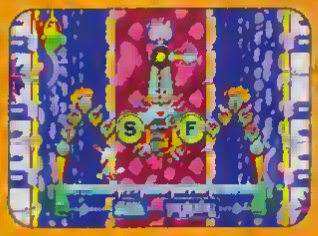
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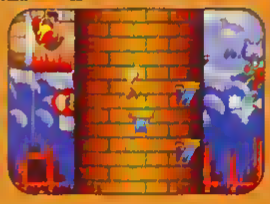
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DYNAMITE HEADDY

[publisher] sega
[genre] platformer
[system] mega drive
[year] 1994







Once upon a time, when 2D action/platform games ruled the day, there lived a marionette named Headdy. Created by the masters of that universe, Treasure, Dynamite Headdy shined a bright light on the genre with a previously unseen amount of play mechanics. Headdy's ability to don a host of different heads such as hammer, bomb, tiny, invisible, sleepy, vacuum, and a whole lot more, and the fact that he could shoot his head, grab onto a point, and swing or ascend...well, you can imagine the gameplay possibilities. Better still, the fact that Dynamite Headdy took place on a puppet stage lent itself to all manner of over-the-top characters, folding props and backdrops, and some of the most creative and wicked bosses to ever grace a screen, anywhere. Games like this normally launch companies and characters into mega-stardom, but Treasure's strict no-sequel policy (they booked on Konami for spewing out so many) has kept this big bright shining star silent along with the Gunstar and Guardian Heroes. And so the only way to witness the splendor that is Dynamite Headdy is to track down the Mega Drive version and have at it on a Genesis, CDX, or Nomad. The US version of the game is great too, although some of the wackier Japanese characters have been Americanized and steeper difficulty needlessly added. I pray that somehow Treasure can master 3D the way they did 2D. We'll find out soon enough.

CONTRA: HARD CORPS

[publisher] konami
[genre] action
[system] genesis
[year] 1994





Not too many people consider this Contra to be a true sequel in the series, and rightfully so. Contra Hard Corps, one of the Genesis' coolest side-scrolling shooters, is sort of the Contra "Alpha" of the series. It's still a thumb-busting shooter fest, packed with amazing bosses and stunning 16-bit effects, but it's a little rounder, a little cheekier, and a lot more bizarre than the other Contra games. That may have something to do with a few Treasure ex-patriots who were rumored to be on the team at the time. This may also explain the incredibly tight (to this day) gameplay and certain never-before-seen-in-a-Contra play mechanics.

Contra Hard Corps is a Genesis graphical tour-de-force. It was released during Sega's 16-bit golden years, when it was considered foolish not to develop a Genesis version of a game alongside a SNES version, when thousands of Contra fans were begging for representation on their Genesis. And while you couldn't have expected a Genesis version of Contra 3 (no way, that game was *way* too powerful even for the sprite masters at Konami to port), gamers needed a quality Genesis shooter with the Contra name, and Konami provided. CHC is a tough, chunky, long and satisfying two-player shooter with so much going for it. The graphics are among the best ever on the system, demonstrating awesome color, tons of parallax, zero slowdown, and some truly insane sprite-based scaling and rotation effects. With three main characters, each offering vastly different weaponry and advantages, and extra moves like slides, 'Hard Corps was also a pleasant departure from the typical Contra mold. The boss encounters, highlighted by the freeway robot battle, were easily among the most memorable (a close second to the indomitable Gunstar Heroes) in Genesis history.

Throughout the whole game, however, a layer of wacked-out humour prevails. The animations are funny, the story breaks (which allow one to branch paths) between stages are written with a wry twist, and the secret areas are strange. Let's just say you don't see giant mutilated ogres pushing explosive shopping carts in most games. Yes friends, Contra Hard Corps is a Genesis classic well worth tracking down.





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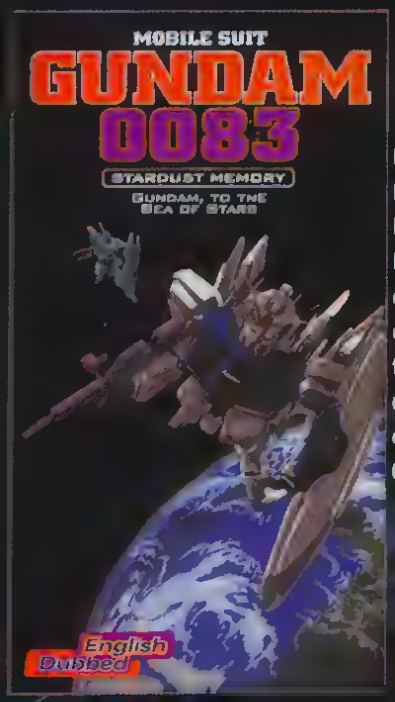
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SABER MARIONETTE AGAIN

•1999 ANIMEVILLAGE COM
54 MINUTES•SUBTITLED
reviewed by dave helverson

Story: Those of you who enjoyed all 25 episodes of *Sobor Morianette J* have much reason to celebrate. With Terra II finally at peace, you'd think *Sobor Marionette J* gone forever. Well, think again! The series is back and looking better than ever! Now that Lorelei's seen to it that the human female will make a comeback (making Terra II a normal male-female society), it would seem that our six favorite marionettes are gone forever. Lord Faust's had supposedly stayed with him (wherever he is), while Lime, Cherry, and Bloodberry sacrificed their maiden circuits (the equivalent of the human heart) to save Terra II (and, of course, Otaru) But did they? Otaru wakes up to a full bed in the first episode of *Sobor Marionette Again*, with, I might add, a little squeeze action. But imagine his surprise when he discovers three more saber dolls around the breakfast table! Faust, having obviously failed with their training, entrusts the saber dolls to Otaru for etiquette instruction. Lime, Cherry, and Bloodberry are less than thrilled. If that's not enough, Lorelei is overcome with guilt, and she's on the suicide path, and there's a mysterious new marionette on the scene, Marina, who's got some sticky fingers and weird secrets. Remember, at the outset of episode 25, the piece of scrap that broke free from the Mesopatamia? Well, she was in it.

Animation: As good as the quality has been for 25 episodes, with the series return we are privy to even smoother animation, reminiscent of the very first episode.

Character Design: Tsukasa Kotobuki's distinct character's are in the house. Pointed noses, curvy bods, and hyper-exaggerated expressions. Oh, and big feet!

Music: All new opening and closing arrangements are excellent, as were the first. The music is high quality throughout, blending well with the situations on screen.

Fight Scenes: Unlike many of the final episodes, there's not a whole lot of fighting in *SM Again*. What there is, however, is done with great care.

Highlight: No sooner than Otaru discovers that the loves of his life have returned, Hanagaki rolls over (yep, he's snuck into bed) and gives him a nice wet one. The ensuing beating he receives is the highlight here.

Final Analysis: I can't get enough of these characters, so i'm good to go all over again if the story is there, and judging by the first two episodes, it most certainly is.



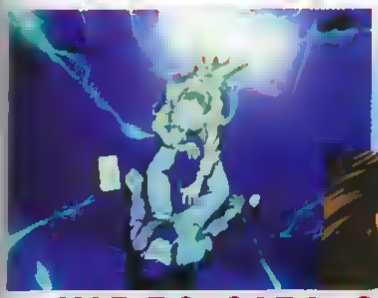
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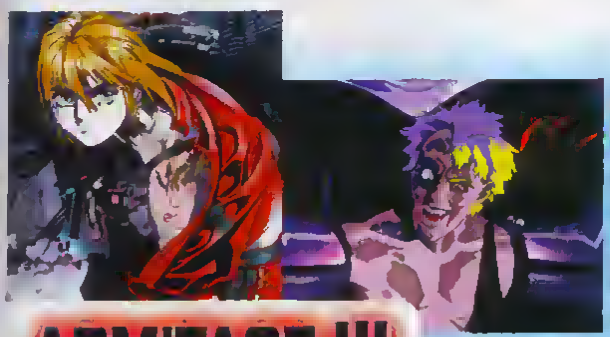
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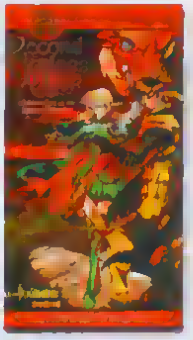
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RECORD OF LODOSS WAR

•1999 US MANGA CORPS
90 MIN•DUBBED IN ENGLISH
reviewed by dave halverson

★★★1/2

Story: Five years after the death of Ghim, *Record of Lodoss War* returns with Chronicles of the Heroic Knight. Harnessed within the cursed island of Lodoss are five ancient dragons, one of which holds the powerful Scepter of Domination from the Governor's Treasure. Ashram the Black Knight of Marmo, thought dead after the War of Heroes, has returned and seeks this ultimate power for his evil bidding. The same six legendary adventurers who saved Lodoss from certain destruction in the past must spring into action once again and stop Ashram and his gruesome slaughter. Within this basic overall plot, the real stories lie within the characters themselves and each of their unique situations. This is a complex, story-driven series.

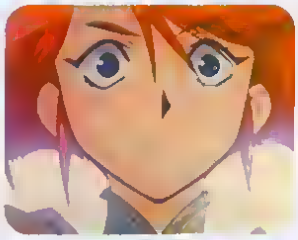


Animation: The opening theme is a testament to poetic editing and fluid animation. Otherwise, the quality overall is pretty good.



Character Designs: Pretty old-school throughout with a realistic look about them. Cool monsters and demons though. Spiky colored hair you will not see.

Dubbing: Some connotations seem a bit off and there's a fair share of under acting. Overall, though, it's tolerable if you prefer your anime dubbed.





Highlight: The complex story itself stands as the crowning jewel of these three episodes. What's more, if you get lost, there's a freaky super-deformed intermission that helps put it all in perspective.

Soundtrack: Excellent. Medieval style tunes and chants abound in high style along with one of the best opening themes I have ever heard. You could call it beautiful, but I ain't no sissy boy.

Fight Scenes: Nicely edited and animated, heightening with the ramifications of each battle.

Final Analysis: For its story alone, *Lodoss War* has always been, and should continue to be, a favorite among adventure and drama fans. Chronicles of the Heroic Knight delivers those qualities, and more, once again.







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HAUNTED JUNCTION V-3

•1999 ANIMEVILLAGE.COM
48 MIN•ENGLISH SUBTITLES
reviewed by dave halverson
★★★1/2

Story: And now, it's time once again to return to the Haunted Junction, the most tweaked high school in the known galaxy. Right off the bat things begin as twisted as they left off, as our assembled ghost busters are chasing down a cluster of evil spooks (spirits are allowed, but not evil ones). Cornering them in the art room, Asahina discharges a wicked kill spell and begins an elaborate maneuver on the black demons, when suddenly—beep-beep, beep beep—she comes to a screeching halt. "My Tamagochi is beeping..." "it pooed." Oh yeah, we're back. Soon after, Haruto meets up with the troubled spirit of the art room, Ichiro Takeda. A cartoonist in his past life, the comic he was working on (in the art room) disappeared in the fray of the exorcism and now one of the tanks featured in it is, er, rolling up on the school. Problems. It's Sailor XO to the rescue! In episode 2 things get even wackier when the spirit world's big TV show (yep, They have their own TV shows) announces that Toilet Hanako's the number one school spirit for the 562nd week in a row. Mistress Yamiko thinks otherwise, and the campaign of terror begins! Who's got the bounciest boobs of all!?









Animation: If my memory serves me, the quality has actually improved since the first four episodes. These episodes feature quite a few sparkling moments.
Music: Excellent. Fits the antics like a prophylactic.
Character Design: Exaggerated, freaky, surreal and everything in between. Bones and Haruo (gut boy) are too cool. It's all about the Cossac dance!
Fight Scenes: Extremely creative. They are many and always bring something special to the proceedings.
Highlight: I think the Tamagotchi thing's got me, although, when Mistress Yamiko pummels that reporter...I laughed my ass off.
Final Analysis: This series is cool. It's funny, masterfully written, has a bizarre wit, and thoroughly entertains. You never, ever, know what to expect.







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FIST OF THE NORTH STAR V3

•1999 MANGA VIDEO
75 MINUTES•DUBBED IN ENGLISH
reviewed by dave halverson
★★★1/2

Story: The tradition of head slicing and body perforation continues as Ken continues his assault on the scum of the Earth. All roads seem to lead to Ken shredding some poor bastard. In episode seven Ken forges ever closer to the tower where the leader of the GDD army, persecutor of the innocent, resides. First, a captain in the army takes a young girl's mother and father hostage to bait Ken like a pig to slaughter. Ken, of course, shows up. But regardless, the assassin kills them both, leaving the girl an orphan. Mistake. Ken puts a time-released move on the guy, so his head explodes as he's driving away like a big chicken. Cool. Next, the fiercest man in the GDD army, Sergeant Mad (he's killed over a thousand men), gets a hold of Ken and actually captures him! Too bad Ken let him just to get close to the big cheese... "You're off to hell now, be on your way." Pop goes the Sergeant! But Ken's most formidable opponent yet still awaits, the Colonel himself, second in command—he's the last man standing between Ken and...

Dubbing: It doesn't get much better. All of the voices fit the characters and the performances are as over-the-top as they need to be.

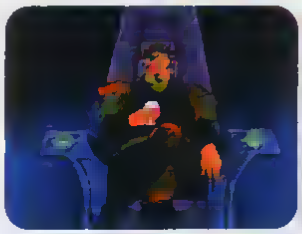
Animation: Fist is old and the animation's rough, but it's presented in a very cool way. This is old-school at its best.

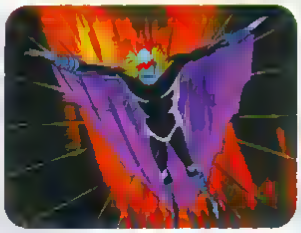
Character Design: Hyper exaggeration, spiky hair, huge eyes...you won't find any of this. Fist is realistic looking but in a very apocalyptic and effective way. Special attention is given to the way bodies split and explode.

Soundtrack: Excellent. Hard-core tunes for hard-core anime!

Highlight: One of GDD's Captain's is driving away after a kick in the head from Ken, talkin' trash about how stupid he was for letting him live when... Doh! Spewage.







Fight scenes: Brutal. But what's with the white blood? I mean, come on. You're blowing up bodies from the inside and showing wholesale murder. You may as well go all the way. The backgrounds during the fights are campy in a cool way.

Final Analysis: This series is just mean. It's full of savages with no regard for human life and a guy who really gets off on making them pay. It has a very cool air about it as a *Mad Max*-like type of escape.

SERIAL EXPERIMENTS LAIN - LAYER 1

•1999 PIONEER
30 MIN.•DUBBED IN ENGLISH
reviewed by dave halverson
★★★★

Story: Lain is a departure for Pioneer that frankly I'm excited to see. Miles away from the cheeky *Tenchi* or *Mysterious Play* and in a whole other galaxy than *Dragonball Z*, Lain is a subtle psychological drama that plays on the mind in a very intriguing way. If David Lynch were to produce an anime it would probably play something like *Lain*. The premise is quite simple. A 13 year old girl from Lains school commits suicide, leaping from a building. The next day, students mysteriously begin to receive email from the dead girl and, thinking it's a sick prank, the tears flow. When Lain receives the same email, though, she reacts differently, and the next day begins to have contact with the girl's spirit who seems to be living in the world's power lines. She actually materializes at one point, as the two pass on the street. As they stand facing each other you don't know what to expect. Is she evil? But those answers, I'm afraid, lie in future episodes. "I just abandoned my body. I still live here" she says. Cool. Lain takes it all in stride as if she almost expected it. This story is about the real world and the wired world and the collision course they seem to be on in modern times. I'm certainly intrigued.







Dubbing: Made to order. You'd never know it was ever not in English.

Animation: The look of Lain doesn't call for utter fluidity as it is a very stylized piece. What's here, though, is done skillfully and in tune with the flow of the story.

Character design: Lain's computer (a Navi) and its operating system are simple, yet brilliant. The detail in the character's eyes are exquisite, and the overall look, extremely clean.

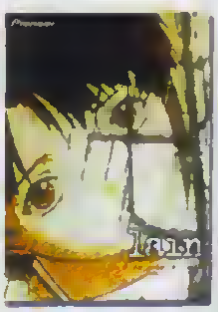
Soundtrack: The opening theme sounds like something you'd hear from Fiona Apple. Otherwise, *Lain* is mostly silent except for ambient sounds and traces of musical accompaniment.

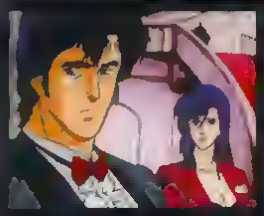
Highlight: The young girl's suicide is a testament to art direction.

Fight scenes: Nuh-uh.

Final Analysis: Highly polished stylized anime. A break from the norm and a series that anyone can get into.















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OUTLAW STAR

•1999 ANIMEVILLAGE.COM
53 MIN.• ENGLISH SUBTITLES
reviewed by dave halverson
★★★★1/2





Story: There's anime. And then there is *anime*—big time, big budget, justice files for the imagination. *Outlaw Star* falls under the latter. In episode one of Bandai's *Outlaw Star*, due in stores this July, we're introduced to the players in this brutal war between Space Pirates and outlaws. On the planet Sentinel III, a level-4 terraformed world, if you want a job done or need some hardware to do it yourself, Gene Starwind and his sidekick Jim Hawking are your men. Gene's a cocky (for good reason: the guys a walking death warrant) mercenary/gun-for-hire with a tragic past. Jim's his trusty genius, kid sidekick. When they're hired by a mysterious and beautiful woman as bodyguards and to secure some serious hardware and nanotech, Gene and Jim find themselves in the middle of a brutal feud for Melfina, an android of vast importance. We soon discover that the woman who did the hiring is the notorious, and beautiful (even under her disguise) outlaw, Hilda. She's swiped Melfina from the Pirate Guild and they want her back in a big way. We don't find out exactly why Melfina is so important in the first two episodes, but the Pirate Guild is certainly bent on getting her back. Within the first two episodes, Hilda shoots Gene point blank, and by the close the two are sleeping in the same room and fighting side by side. This is going to be a cool series.



Animation: In episode one, excellent. They really start things off with a bang. Things calm down a bit in episode two, but overall the quality is still way above average.

Fight scenes: They're absolutely beautiful, especially in episode one. The artillery alone is worth the price of admission.

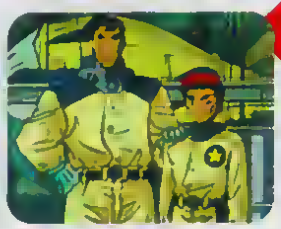
Highlight: The Pirate Guild take chase after Gene, Hilda, and Jim at the outset of episode one and we're introduced to the pirates Tao magic, and Gene and Jim's serious arsenal of hardware in an explosive display.

Soundtrack: Excellent classical score throughout, accompanied by a slick opening theme. Sound effects are first rate too.

Character Design: A first-class ticket to anime heaven. Not only are the characters super cool, but the worlds themselves and their inhabitants and vehicles are the things sci-fi dreams are made of.

Final Analysis: I haven't been this excited about a new series since *Evangelion*. All the makings of a classic are in effect.







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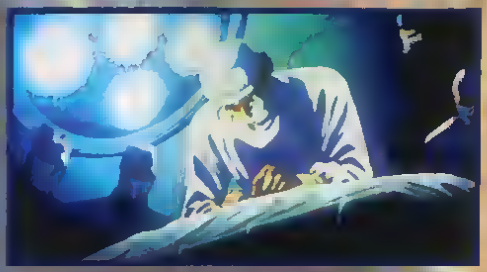
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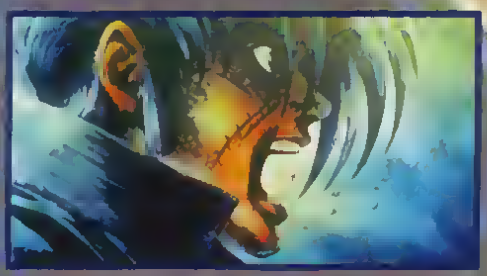
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GAMERS' REPUBLIC EDITORS' TOP 5

D. Halverson	ADV's R. Peters	lone-star B. Atwell
1. Outlaw Star animevillage.com	1. Ninja Resurrection ADV	1. Perfect Blue Manga
2. Sabor Marionette Again av.com	2. Neon Gen. Evangelion ADV	2. Macross: Do You Remember Love
3. Bubblegum Crisis 2040 ADV	3. Darkstalkers VIZ	3. Venus Wars US Manga
4. Ninja Resurrection ADV	4. Ushio & Tora ADV	4. Porco Rosso
5. Ninja Cadets AnimeWorks	5. Ping Pong Club	5. Golden Boy ADV



gamers' Republic anime top 5

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READERS' TOP 5

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2. Evangelion ADV Films
3. Ninja Cadets! US Manga
4. Ghost in the Shell Manga
5. Revolutionary Girl Utena VIZ

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AUSTIN POWERS THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME



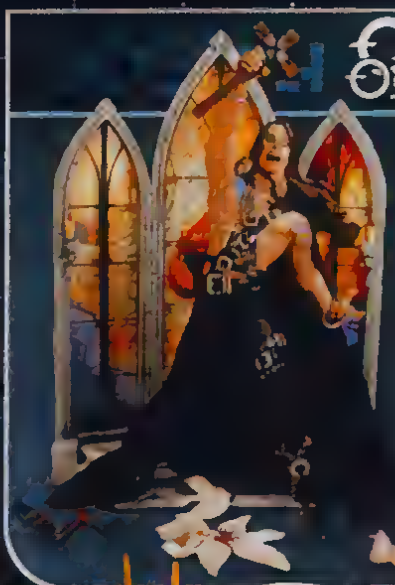
...get rips off [illegible] Me, [illegible] the whole lot [illegible] Some even talk...I wonder what [illegible] Seriously, Todd said himself that these are the most sophisticated figures yet, in terms of expression. I, for one, believe it.

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KOTOBUKIYA

Gamers' Re[public] Music Reviews



Touted as the next big thing in UK House, the "bomb track" off Basement Jaxx' debut album Remedy is definitely a sign of brilliance. "Red Alert" is receiving wax-melting DJ play right now across the pond. This wickedly intoxicating slammer of a track incorporates pounding four on the floor drums, slap bass riffs that could scare the shit out of a herd of elephants, and a powerful siren guiding the tearing funk through its paces without lyrical failure. It's a massive one. That track's been floating around for a while though, so the rest of the album holds all new treats. Take "Rendez-Vu," for example. This track is a testament to the unique organic house/funk power that Basement Jaxx possess: a freaky vocoder-ized vocal set tip toes through a pounding house beat, firmly linked to the floor by a gorgeous little latin guitar float that ties the juicy bastard together nice and tight. The latin influence prevails once again on tracks like "Bingo Bango," as mad, blissed-out pianos dash across the spectrum, while pumping hip-hop flavors can be tasted on "U Can't Stop Me" and abstracted further, vocals eliminated, ambience extracted, on tracks like "Stop 4 Love." This addictive debut demands recognition, and more Basement Jaxx will be required soon. They're breaking molds and killing categories with a strange, tasty Remedy.

Mike Griffin

Basement Jaxx
XL Recordings, Import
B+



This is the first in a series of Trance Nation double-CD compilations, brought to you by one of the UK's finest labels, Ministry of Sound. 90 percent of the tracks on this hefty 36-track compilation are total classics (literally). Who can forget Underworld's all-time floor crushing bombshell "Dark & Long." Robert Miles' gentle epic "Children," BT's blissfully layered Ima Dub version of "Loving You More" or Art of Trance's defining moment, "Madagascar." These are all masterful trance and progressive house classics mixed to perfection by System F/Ferry Corsten intact and together where they belong after so many years apart. Although I believe Paul Okenfold's Tranceport compilation offers the most solid pure-tranca collection available today, Trance Nation contains beautiful all-time dream anthems like Future Sound of London's Papua New Guinea. It also contains other gorgeous vocal tracks that most trance comps tend to avoid these days, and the order of the mix is intelligent. This isn't some typical hyper-commercialized K-tel compilation as the simple title might lead one to believe. This is the cream of the crop, selected by a highly respected label like Ministry of Sound. I will be enjoying these two discs for months to come.

Mike Griffin

Trance Nation
Ministry of Sound Recordings, Import
B

Very few games of late benefit from a complete, multi-artist soundtrack that's been created exclusively with the game in mind. I'm not talking about a soundtrack filled with popular commercially available tracks with titles and lyrics that are slightly applicable to the game's theme. I mean original music, created for the game by artists who see and play the game throughout its development, fully aware of the sensations it may provoke in the gamer at the controls.

There is one company, however, that is determined to assemble the finest sounds from several captivating artists for use in a revolutionary new title. That company is Shiny, the game is Messiah, and the artists range from progressive metal bands like Fear Factory to game music veterans like Jesper Kyd. Each contributor has spent time at Shiny HQ with the game, discussing scenarios and situations in place or pending implementation, much like the graphic artists conceptualizing level designs with the producer. Every track, whether a six minute ambient fusion, a three minute guitar-fueled action piece, or a thirty second interactive loop, is totally applicable to the theme, style, and gameplay on screen. A game like Shiny's Messiah requires this exacting balance of musical flavors, if only to isolate and compliment the unprecedented interactivity, intelligence, and versatility of its design.

This is Part 1 of our 2 part in-depth look into Messiah's sound and music development. This month we speak with one half of the team responsible for Messiah's ambient soundtrack, Copenhagen-based post-industrial fusion band Sire Effeny. Soren Persson was in town from Denmark where he and partners Lars, Jakob Hvitnow, and Arvid Gregersen are creating Messiah's essential ambient accompaniment.

GR: How did you first get into music production?
Soren: Well I've always played music in rock bands, as long as I can remember, then a few years ago my partner and I got together to form our industrial project, Side Effekt. We were making "hardcore" kind of stuff, like Skinny Puppy, that sort of thing. We were going well for a couple of years, but then suddenly the scene went dead. We couldn't get any good gigs, and the interest just wasn't there anymore.

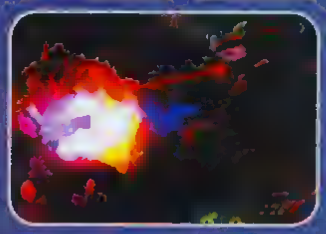
GR: Is this when Messiah came up as a possible venture?
S: Yes. My brother is working as a programmer, actually, on Messiah. He asked at the time (last year) if we wanted to work on music for the game, and when he told us a little about it we said, "Sure!"...and now here we are (laughs). We were very nervous when we made our first demo for Shiny. The game is so good we had to produce something that could compare to their standards.

GR: Now that you've been around the game industry, what do you think of game music production compared to regular, album music production?
S: Well in this case, what we have to create is very specific. We have to do all the levels, so we're taking into

GAMERS' REPUBLIC INTERVIEWS

SIDE EFFEKT





account all the scenery to make sure the music really fits. Yes, with game music, you're sort of bound to make certain types of music. It's not as free as other kinds of music production; it has to reflect what you see on the screen.



GR: Do you always have access to the game as you create the soundtrack?
S: No, not always. Myself and Lars from Side Effekt, and two other guys doing the music with us, have spent time with Shiny three times so far during the course of this project. While we're here we closely monitor the development so we can see where the game is going. When we can't make it (from Denmark), Shiny sends us videos of the different levels as they progress, and then we try out the levels when we can visit.

GR: Are you creating Messiah's music as a set soundtrack, or it designed to be more interactive? For example, does your music appear in the game at set, precise moments?
S: No. It's a soundtrack. They're all pretty long pieces, in the range of 6 minutes sometimes for each level. So it's never looping or cutting in, it's always there in the background. Fear Factory will come in when you're about to kick somebody's ass.

GR: So you guys are contributing CD audio, and it's all ambient stuff?
S: Yeah that's what they're calling it, "Ambient", but I don't know if it's ambient. It's definitely moody music, no action at all. It's only atmospheric sounds, no drums.

GR: What equipment are you using to create the music in studio?
S: It's mainly the two other guys who work with the sequencers and good programs like Fasttrack, but we all use tons of waveform equipment, stuff like Wavelab. They all have different advantages, so they're all valuable to the process.

GR: Is it your first time creating an "Ambient" soundtrack?
S: Yeah, it's the first time I've ever worked on this type of music.

GR: Are you enjoying the process, and how does it compare to your past studio and live production?
S: Yeah, it's a lot of fun. It feels more like a job maybe, compared to making our rock and hardcore stuff. When we do that stuff we're very active in the studio, not just sitting down and concentrating like with this project. We also have to consider the crowd at our live performances when we make our own music. When we do the game music, we do stuff like turning off all the lights in the room, to look at the monitor images and imagine what it might be like for the player. We even add subtle sound effects to the music that reflects the type of level. You'll feel enclosed in Messiah's world.

GR: So what do you think of the game so far?
S: I think it's brilliant. Really, the best game ever.

GR: Do you have any favorite games or systems?
S: All the Shiny stuff is my favorite! (laughs). I prefer the PC, but I like PlayStation.

GR: So you've done industrial, you're getting into electro because the hardcore scene is fading, and now you're doing ambient music. What did you listen do when you were growing up to prepare you for all this?
S: Oh...shitty music. I was introduced to a lot of music by my brother, so the first type of music I got into was bad heavy metal (laughs). Later I got into all kinds of stuff, from Tom Waits to Skinny Puppy. Six years ago I started to create my own music...

GR: After this project do you think you'll stay in video game music?
S: Well it would have to be for games like Messiah. It would have to have a certain mood, like Messiah does, before I would consider working with the game. It would have to be music that I like myself. No Mario 64 music that's for sure (laughs). I love the theme and story of Messiah.

Thanks to Scott at Interplay for the set-up, David Perry for the informative conversation, but most of all Soren for his time and candid answers!

Street Fighter Alpha 3





Street Fighter Alpha 3 is the finest Capcom arcade port to even grace the PS. It goes to prove that the system can indeed handle powerful CPS2 ports, thanks to a few tricks. Speaking of tricks...

Fight Against Akuma in Final Battle

Access the Final Battle mode and select your character. Before the vs. screen appears, hold down L1 + L2.

Fight as Guile and Evil Ryu

To unlock these hidden characters, you will need to build your fighter to level 30 or greater. Doing so will allow you to access three additional stages. In the first bonus stage, Guile is the boss. Defeating Guile will make him available on the character select screen. Evil Ryu is the final boss in the next bonus level. Defeating Evil Ryu will make him available on the character selection screen.

Secret Opening Cinema

Under Options mode, compile a total of 48 hours of play. This will access a secret opening cinema which includes all of the new characters.

Access All Secret Modes

By accumulating a total of 96 hours worth of play (whew!) under options, you will have access to all of the game's hidden play modes.

Access Team Battle and Survival Modes

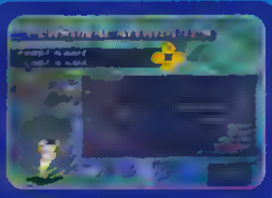
Complete a World Tour with Fair results.

Access Dramatic Battle and Final Battle Modes

Complete Arcade mode with a difficulty level of 8.

Ken Griffey Jr.'s Slugfest





Weebleman

Go to the create player menu and enter CODE as the first name and WEEBLEMAN as the last name for some very screwed-up-looking players

Tiny Players

Go to the create player menu and enter CODE as the first name and LIDDLELEAGUE as the last name for some small screwed-up-looking players

Exploding Batter

In order for the following code to work, it must be entered very quickly as soon as a batter steps to the plate: Press Right, Left, Down, Right, Left, Up, Right, Left, Down. Pop goes the batter!

Automatic Home Run

This code only works using the man himself, Ken Griffey, Jr. To hit a home run on the next pitch, quickly enter Left, Left, Right, Right, Right, Left, Left. If done successfully, Junior will point his bat to where he will hit the ball. Simply hit the next pitch and watch it soar.

Create Stadium Fireworks

Choose to play in Exhibition mode. Select a stadium. View the stadium by pressing the Z trigger. The following code works only when you are near home plate: Press the Z trigger and the top shoulder R button.

Peter Pan Outfielder

Due to the complexity of this code, it is not recommended for novice code masters. During a game, when a ball is hit in the air to one of your outfielders, do not catch it. Pick it up, hold the Z trigger and press the top C button to run into the infield with the ball. Once on the infield, use the C buttons to throw the ball around-the-horn in the following sequence: Right, Up, Left, Down, Left, Up, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down. If done correctly, you will hear the fans boo. Now for the fun part: when the next ball is hit to the outfield, leave it alone. Instead, just start tapping either the A or B button to take to the skies.

A Bug's Life

OPEN UP ALL LEVELS

To access all 25 levels of the N64 version of A Bug's Life, begin by pressing start at the title screen to go to the options menu. Now go right to the first level, called "Anthill," and press and hold all four C buttons and the Z trigger simultaneously, then tap the R shoulder button. A right arrow will appear at the bottom of the screen signifying that the trick has been activated, and you'll be allowed access to all of the game's many levels.

Chocobo Racing

ACCESS SECRET CHARACTERS

There are eight hidden characters in Chocobo Racing from a variety of Square games, including FFVII, FFVIII and Parasite Eve. The secret characters are obtained by completing the Story mode multiple times, highlighting Squall at the character select screen and inputting the correct code. The following list describes the number of completions needed, the correct buttons to be inputted and the character that will be opened:

3x + L1 = Cid
4x + L2 = Mumbo
5x + R1 = Cloud
6x + R2 = Cactuar
7x + L1+L2 = Aya
8x + R1 + R2 = SD-style Chocobo
9x + L1 + R1 = Iben Super Airship
10x + L2 + R2 = Jack

Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko

INVINCIBILITY

To play as invincible Gex, pause the game. Hold L2 and press Down, Up, Left, Left, Triangle, Right, and Down. You will hear a noise if you've performed the code correctly.

FORCE GEX TO TALK

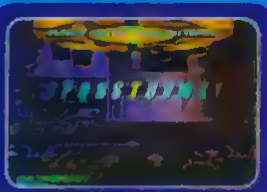
The following code will allow you to hear the amusing sayings of Gex. Pause the game. Hold L2 and press Down, Right, Left, Circle, Up and Right. You will hear a noise if you've performed the code correctly. Press Start to continue the game and then press Select to hear Gex speak.

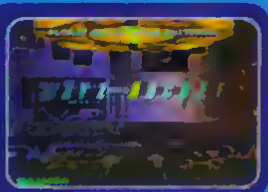
LEVEL SELECT

To access the debugging menu which includes options such as level select, pause the game and hold R2, press Up, Circle, Right, Up, Left, Right and Down. Press Start to continue the game and then press Select to access the debugging menu.









Star Wars: Episode One: Racer

TURBO START

If you've ever played Star Wars: Episode One: Racer and have managed a course perfectly and still lost just by a fraction of a second, then this is the tip for you. At the start of any race, as the countdown is commencing, right as the last number disappears, jam on the A button for a quick boost off of the line. By the way, this tip also works with Diddy Kong Racing.

ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS

Placing first in many of the courses in each circuit will open up new characters. The following list shows you which character will be made available after winning the courses.

Amateur Circuit:
Beedo's Wild Ride – Aldar Beedo
Aquilaris Classic – Clegg Holdfast
Spice Mine Run – Mars Guo
Vengeance – Fud Seng
Mon Gazza Speedway – Teemto Pagalies

Semi-Pro Circuit:
Bumpy's Breakers – Ark "Rumpy" Roose
Zugga Challenge – Boles Roor
Sunken City – "Ballseye" Nevior
Baroo Coast – Neva Kee
Howler Gorge – Ratts Tyerell
Scrapper's Run – Wan Sandage

Invitational Circuit:
Inferno – Ben Quadinaros
Abyss – Bozzie Baranta
AP Centrum – Slide Paremita

Galactic Circuit:
Andobi Mountain Run – Mawhonic
Boonta Classic – Sebulba
Executioner – Toy Dampner

DEEP BLUE SEA
Warner Bros. Pictures

Not Yet Rated
In theaters July 30



Take two parts *Jaws*, one part *Aliens*, one part *Sphere* (it's got Samuel L. Jackson underwater!), and a dash of *Titanic* (it was filmed at the site James Cameron had built for that movie), and cook it for four years, and you'll get Renny Harlin's *Deep Blue Sea*. Set on a floating research facility in the Pacific, *DBS* stars Saffron Burrows as a researcher who is experimenting with the brains of deadly mako sharks in an attempt to find a way to regenerate human brain tissue. She's assisted by shark expert Carter Blake (Thomas Jane) and cook Sherman "Preacher" Dudley (LL Cool J). It's when Russell Franklin (played by Samuel L. Jackson), one of the financial backers of the project, comes to visit the facility and assess his investment, that all hell breaks loose. The sharks, having become smarter due to the experiments, tire of being the test subjects and inadvertently (or is it?!?) sabotage the floating lab. As it begins to sink, the survivors must figure out how to escape the killing machines they've created.



Will this be the next *Jaws* or the next *Sphere*? There are enough heavy hitters, both in front of and behind the cameras, that it looks promising. Director Harlin went after this cast for their abilities to create believable characters in unbelievable circumstances, and pushed them farther than they might have imagined possible. And the special effects crews, working with both live sharks and animatronics in addition to CG, worked hard to make the unbelievable quite bone-chillingly believable.



In the end, we are promised a thrilling, on-the-edge-of-your-seat action/adventure/horror film, and I'm fully looking forward to it. It may be safe to go back in the water, but this summer, stay out of the floating research vessels.

OROCHI: THE EIGHT-HEADED DRAGON
ADV Films



Those who faithfully read our anime reviews are familiar with ADV films, one of the best sources for quality anime. They also carry live action films from the East, like this one originally released in Japan in 1994. Upon my first viewing, I couldn't figure out if I was watching a samurai movie, a Japanese monster movie, an action/adventure quest movie, a star-crossed love story, or a film of dark politics and family betrayal. Then it hit me: this is an RPG on film! *Orochi* follows the story of Yamato Takeru, born as the second twin to a nobleman in feudal Japan. Steeped heavily in classic Japanese mythology, you'll learn a lot about the ancient gods of Japan and the traditions of that time. The nobleman's shaman, a mysterious figure named Suko-onah, convinces the father that the second twin is evil, and persuades him to have the baby thrown from the highest cliff in the land. The child is saved by the White Phoenix, and some think him to be destined for greatness, while others want him dead. We get to watch as he grows up under his father's distrustful eye, and after his mother and brother's untimely deaths (which he gets blamed for), he is sent on many quests, mostly to try to kill him, but we learn it's all to fulfill his destiny of saving the earth from a returning evil god.

There is a fair amount of swordplay and martial arts action, some of which is hokey and some which is pretty good, as well as a healthy dose of magic and the supernatural. And since this is from the same folks who brought us Godzilla, expect a menagerie of rubber-suited monsters, although most look good (they just don't move so good). The effects range from laughable to spectacular, and be on the lookout for the evil god Sukuyomi in the crystal space pod, taken straight from the first Superman—well, it *looks* like it is! *Orochi* is definitely a decent rental, if you can find it; fans of Japanese mythology and RPGs could justify a purchase.



For ages 15+; Available on VHS

THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR



• MARVEL IN THE MOVIES: The X-Men movie seems to be [illegible]. Patrick Stewart has signed on as Professor Xavier, Sir Ian McKellen will be Magneto, and wrestler Tyler Mane will play Sabretooth. Additionally, Luke Wilson is [illegible] the studio is hot to have Dougray [illegible] may even make a cameo as Cyclops.

• STAR WARS STORIES: Word has it that Mayhew, master of the Wookiees, [illegible]



[illegible] to [illegible] A [illegible] In [illegible] Steve Trevor Eve [illegible] film, valued at $60,000. He must [illegible] is slated [illegible] singer [illegible] him. This might [illegible] Wahlberg's [illegible]

TAP'S BOOGIE NIGHTS: Mark Wahlberg, who's a big name metal band gives their [illegible] from an unknown but bound to replace [illegible] (I don't know yet), but I'm praying it's [illegible] please please... •

BEAM ME UP, GOD: DeForest Kelley



DeForest Kelley, best known for his portrayal of Dr. Leonard "Bones" McCoy in the long running *Star Trek* series, died on June 11 in the Motion Picture and Television Fund Hospital. He was 79.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1920, DeForest enjoyed success appearing in numerous television shows and, most notably, westerns such as *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral*. But it was his turn as the grumpily affable foil to Leonard Nimoy's Spock in the classic *Star Trek* series that earned him worldwide recognition. His most recently completed work can be seen in the *Trekkies* documentary film.

DeForest Kelley had one last turn as Dr. "Bones" McCoy in the currently unfinished Star Trek: Secret of Vulcan Fury CD-ROM. After inspiring perhaps thousands to enter the medical field, he will be sorely missed.

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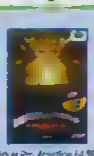
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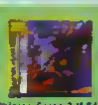
U.S.

WWF Attitude
Pokemon Snap N64
Shadowman
Duke Nuken: Zero Hour
NFL QB Club 2000
Jet Forcegemini

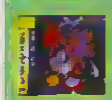
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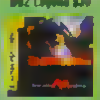




IMPORT

Capcom Generation 1-5
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Street Fighter Zero 3
Sonic the Fighter
Sonic 3D Flinky Island









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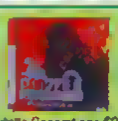
Expendable
Soggy Heat
Climax Landers
Air Force Delta
Soul Calibur
Sundam Side Story
Space Griffon
Fram Grido
Dynamite Deka 2
Redline Racer
Street Fighter Zero 3
Tokyo Highway Battle
New Japan Pro Wrestling
Giant Gram-All Japan Pro Wrestling 2
The King of Fighter Dream Match 99
Elemental Gimmick Gear



Psychic Force $39



Blue Stinger $45



Godzilla Generations $29



Incoming $45



Jsrfy $29



Virtua Fighter 3 $29



Marvel VS. Capcom $39



Sonic Adventure $29



Seventh Cross $54



Pen Pen Tricelon $29



House of Dead 2 $85 (with gun)



Monaco Grand Prix 2 $45



Tetris 4D $49



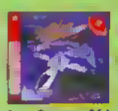
SengokuTurb $49



Evolution $54



Super Speed Racing $39



Aero Dancing $54



Power Stone $45



Sega Rally 2 $45





IMPORT

Dragon Quest VII
Front Mission 3
Macross VF 2
Star Ixiom
Dragon Valor
Psychic Force 2
Valken 2
Legend of Mana
Toro and Kobin
Vandall Heart 2
Dino Crisis
Fatalfury Wild Ambition
Fir Pro Wrestling G
Rival School 2
Grandia 2
Metal Gear Integral
Racing Lagoon
Virtuahiryu No Ken 2
Gran Turismo 2
Cybermetic Empire
Jo Jo Adventure

U.S.

Tarzan
Shao Lin
Star Wars 1/Phan
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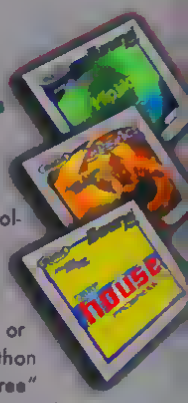
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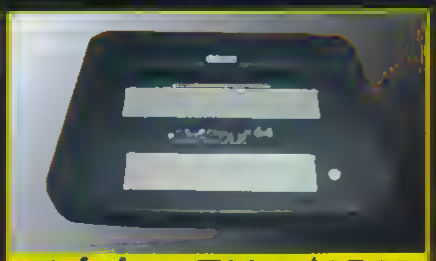


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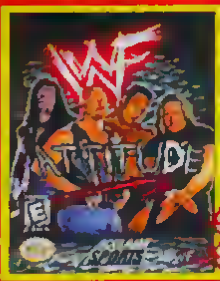
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FINAL FANTASY VIII Through an intricate balance of story, graphics and sound the creators at Final Fantasy express their thoughts and feelings in a story brought to life through high quality graphics and elegantly composed sound and music. Characters gain combat experience points even if they turn and flee from battle.

Squaresoft (Roleplaying)
Release: 8/99
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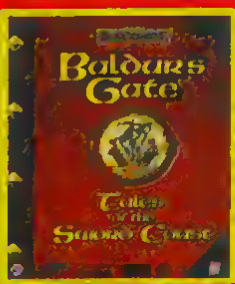
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Konami (Adventure)
Release: 8/99
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Sierra(Action)
Release: NOW
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'COMMAND & CONQUER 2 TIBERIAN SUN' New engine, improved controls, dynamic 3D terrain & multiple levels of warfare. Interactive & kinetic battlefield ion storms, ice fields & more. Play solo skirmishes or take on your computer in full Campaign Mode. Connect with up to 8 friends over IPX or LAN or one-on-one over modem.

Virgin (Strategy)
Release: 7/99
PC CD

$49.99

◂ Earthworm Jim 3D, Continued from page 32

pesky poultrygeists have hidden her head! In Boogie Nights of the Living Dead Jim meets Granny DJ (and her huge droopy bosoms), helps flush a zombie that's stuck in a toilet, and does a little disco dancing zombie style! The goal in each level is to collect marbles which repair the fabric of Jim's mind, and Golden Udders, needed to open portals to the four sections of Jim's brain. Peter Puppy's in the main brain to explain it all to Jim, and if you walk up to the front portal you can look through Jim's eyes as they wheel him down the hospital corridors. It's all good my fellow Jim fans and headed our way very soon, so get ready for the first of what will hopefully be a long line of new Earthworm Jim adventures.

◂ Rayman 2, Continued from page 35

instantly intelligible and Rayman feels light and nimble. Strafing is instantly user friendly, and the cameras operate flawlessly no matter what the circumstance. This is the Tonic engine with even more refinements, and it is a wondrous innovation. Lighting effects, transparencies, and all manner of cool filters abound, the waterfalls flow smoothly and the architecture is astonishing. The music of course, is excellent as well with a playful sense about it that builds to foreboding when the mood arises.

Rayman The Great Escape will surely be at the top of every gamers list for game of the year, and will likely edge its way onto my all time top 20. With any luck reviewable versions of both this and the PC version will be headed our way, and thusly yours, shortly.

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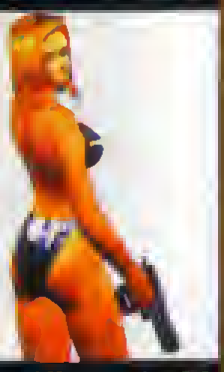
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SEPTEMBER 1999

As the September issue approaches and, more importantly, September itself, gamers everywhere are no doubt thinking about Sega's Dreamcast, the first 128-bit console to land in America. Many of you have undoubtedly already seen the light and plunked down a deposit, while we're sure many of you are as of yet undecided, with the eminent arrival of two more super systems on the horizon—albeit the far horizon. Next month we'll dish out an even larger dose than usual of Dreamcast to help you either realize your dream or wake up in a cold sweat. Expect as much coverage on the U.S. launch as we can possibly muster, as well as a look into the future and what it has in store. Then, well, the rest is up to you.

ISSUE #16

STREET DATE 8.10.99



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OH GOOD, NOW THEY'LL LET ANYONE PLAY.



MARIO GOLF



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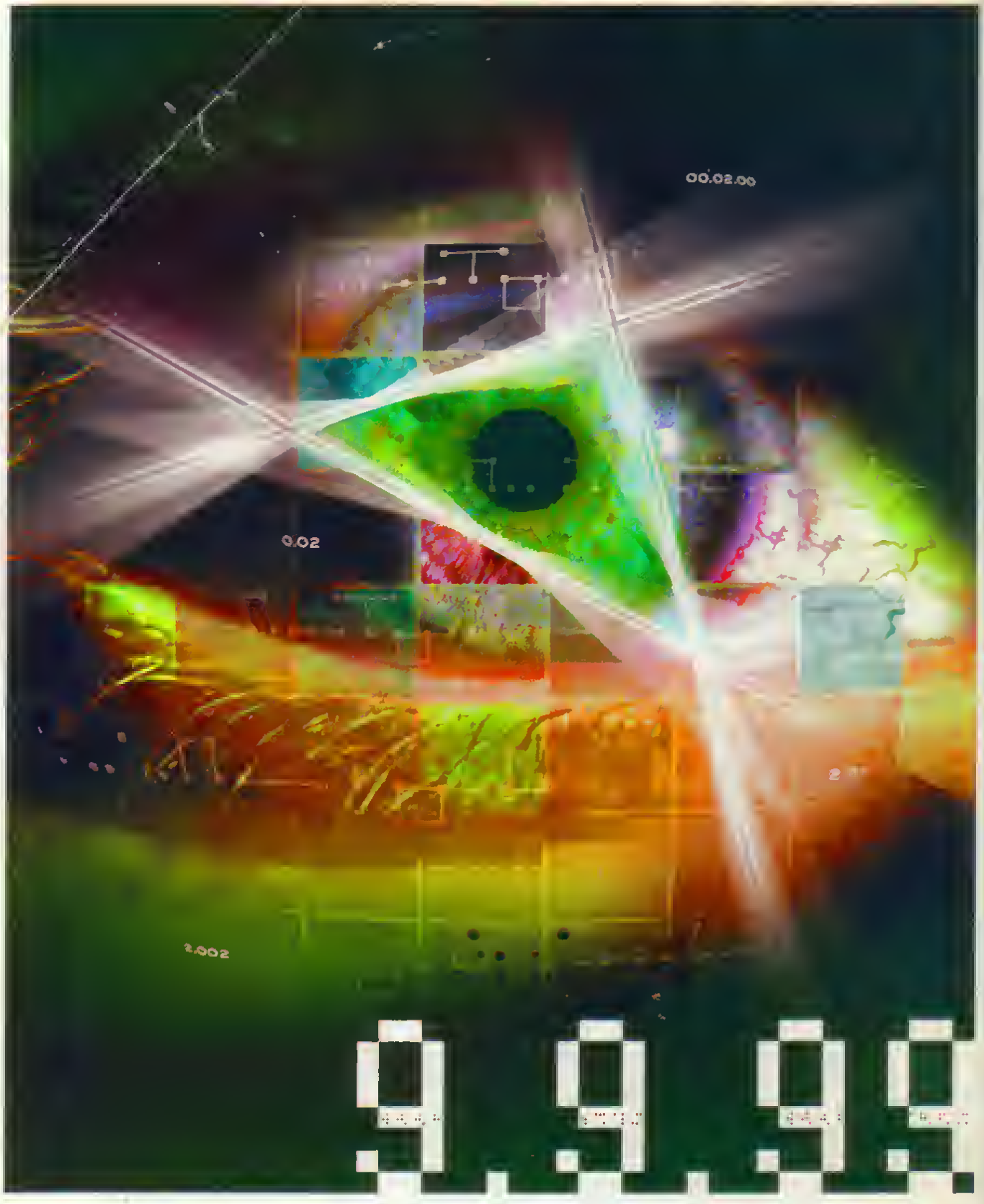


Taunt your opponents in mid-swing.



Golf etiquette? Yeah, right.

N64



0.02

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE HINT>

OUTSMARTING IT WILL ONLY
MAKE IT SMARTER.

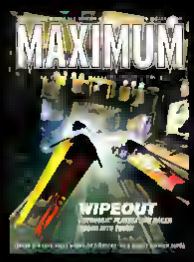
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